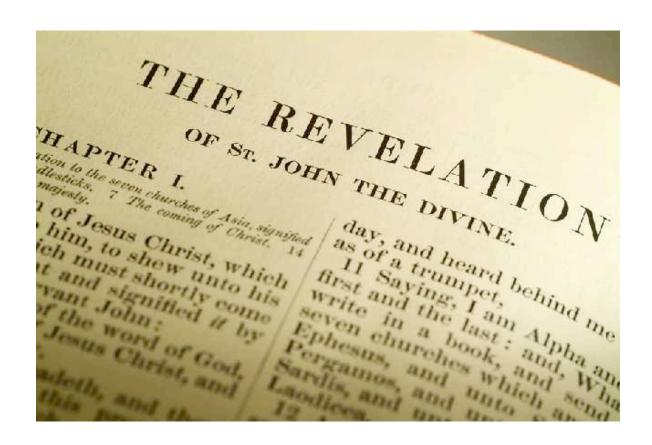
THE THIRD FACET: REVELATION 6 AND 7



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

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The Fellowship of Ailbe

Revelation: The Third Facet Revelation 6 and 7 Copyright 2015 T. M. Moore The Fellowship of Ailbe www.ailbe.org

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Revelation 6 and 7

The scene shifts back from heaven to earth as the Lamb begins to open the scroll of God, and John is treated to a concise overview of general trends affecting the whole of human history from his day to ours.

And at the forefront of these is a Rider on a white horse, Who is conquering and overcoming everything in His path.

Meanwhile, in heaven, saints who have already arrived at their temporary lodgings long to see the end of all things, but are told they must wait until their ranks have been completely filled. Then, at the end of this facet, we receive a glimpse forward, to the end of time as we know it and the coming judgment of the Lord.

The third facet advances the story of Christ's sovereign care for His Bride, whom He is gathering to Himself according to the eternal Word and decree of God.

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We hope you find this study of Revelation a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Conquering and to Conquer

Week 5, Monday: The Rider on the white horse

Let's review: Our study began with John's vision of Christ, exalted in glory – and therefore, in a sense, "timeless" – and standing in the midst of the candlesticks representing the Church – and so, in time. From the midst of that vision Jesus commanded seven timeless messages to seven particular, "in time", churches. Immediately thereafter John was introduced to a vision of worship in heaven, focused on the Lamb Who is worthy to open the mysterious scroll of God – a "timeless" scenario if ever there was one.

Now, in Revelation 6 and 7, we turn to the third "facet" of the Bride's engagement ring. Here again we are advised of things both timeless and in time – things that must always be the case, and matters that are actually occurring *in* time at *all* times. And this exciting vision opens with the Centerpiece of worship becoming the Centerpiece of cosmic history.

This time, however, He comes not as a Lamb, but as the mighty Conqueror.

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on Revelation 6.1, 2

- 1. The Lamb opens a seal so that the words written upon it are exposed. A "living creature" with "a voice like thunder" invites us to have a look at what the scroll reveals. We recall that the living creatures represent creation in service to God (cf. Ps. 119.89-91). Is there instruction for us here concerning how the "two books" of revelation creation and Scripture work together?
- 2. Commentators differ on the identify of the Rider on the white horse. In Revelation Jesus will draw on previous Biblical images for His message, both to bring to a denouement all the revelation of Scripture, and to aid us in understanding His message throughout. Meditate on Psalm 45.6, Zech. 10.3-5, and Zech. 9.13. How do such passages teach us to think about this Rider, His horse, and His weaponry? Does the "crown" the Rider wears help us in establishing His identity? How about Revelation 19.11-16?
- 3. The Rider goes forth "conquering and to conquer." This is the same word (Greek: niko) that Jesus used in addressing the 7 churches in Asia Minor (you might need to do a quick review of Revelation 2 and 3). This choice of words is deliberate, because we have already received some idea concerning what this "overcoming" or "conquering" might entail. Review Revelation 2.7, 11, 17, 26 and Revelation 3.5, 12, 21. What does this "conquering" or "overcoming" entail?
- 4. In a single sentence, summarize what the Lord promises those who join Him in His work of "overcoming" or "conquering." Should we think of this work in military or political terms, or is a spiritual analogy suggested (cf. Eph. 6.10-20)? Explain.
- 5. The Rider on the white horse is conquering continuously. He has come in His Kingdom, as He declared during His incarnation, and that Kingdom is growing and overcoming and will continue to do so throughout the course of history (cf. Dan. 2.44, 45; Is. 9.6, 7). Complete the following sentence: "Jesus rides forth day by day, conquering and overcoming, and I..."

My Reflection

What would you point to in your life to indicate that you ride out daily with the Lord Jesus, conquering and to conquer? Where do you need to improve in this calling to "overcome"?

The Glory of God

The story of the Bible and of human history – all history – is the story of the Rider on the white horse. He comes forth as and according to the Word of God, and all creation witnesses to the fact that He is the Centerpiece of all time. We need the Lamb of God to open the scroll of His story to us, and we need to "get up under Him" as He rides forth conquering and to conquer. How should this lead us to think about the rest of the book of Revelation?

Glory to Glory

What does it take to go forth with the Lord as He overcomes with and blesses His people? Can we expect to do this apart from His Word? Apart from prayer? By ourselves? Explain.

Memorize

Our memory verses for this week are Revelation 6.1, 2. Write these verses on an index card, using your preferred translation of the Bible. Carry this with you throughout the week, and spend some time each day working to memorize this passage. Why do you think these would be especially important verses to have in mind each day?

Closing Prayer

The Lord shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! Your people *shall be* volunteers
In the day of Your power;
In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.

Psalm 110.2, 3

2 The Ways of Men on Earth

Week 5, Tuesday: Three riders and horses

Three more seals are opened, revealing more of what is written in the scroll of the Lord. Three other horses and riders are released on the earth, and their "riding" coincides with the "conquering and to conquer" of the Rider on the white horse. There is thus both a timelessness and an "in-timeness" to what is revealed by the opening of these three seals. The Rider on the white horse will have to contend with other situations and other interests as He presses forward His claims and Kingdom.

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on Revelation 6.3-8

- 1. The rider on the red horse comes forth next (vv. 3, 4). What do this horse and rider represent? Why do nations indulge this policy and practice? What are they hoping to gain? In what ways does this "interest" compete with that of the Rider on the white horse?
- 2. Scales and balances symbolize the marketplace people doing business (vv. 5, 6). Here, commerce is depicted as "black." The price of that which is needed by all people, especially the poor, is sky high a bag of grain for a day's wage (cf. Matt. 20.2)! Those commodities more associated with the rich are not to be harmed (v. 6). What are we to think about the state of "business" during the course of human history? What threats or dangers does this oppose to the Rider on the white horse?
- 3. The fourth horse and rider represent creation sick and sickening (vv. 7, 8). In particular, what *kind* of "sickness" do this horse and rider seem to represent (note the abstract, "Death," and the specific place, "Hades")? How does this kind of sickness affect the rest of creation (cf. Gen. 3.17-19; Gen. 9.2)? Meditate on Romans 8.19-22. Does the "sickness" of creation have anything to do with the Rider and His white horse? Explain.
- 4. Four "threads" or "streams" of activity, events, and conditions are thus revealed to be continually at work during the course of human history in verses 1-8. And this is according to the words written in the scroll of God. Why didn't God simply decree the Rider on the white horse as the only "rider" through the course of history? Why are these other sad, sick, and violent currents flowing through history as well? Meditate on Romans 9.17 as you think about how to answer these questions.
- 5. It seems inevitable that the "paths" of these four horses will intersect, overlap, run parallel, and clash at times during the course of human history. Given the nature of the last three horses and riders, what do you suppose might be some of the implications for the Rider and His white horse of this continuous interplay and clash of interests and conditions?

My Reflection

Should your Christian life be entirely free of conflict, trouble, persecution, pain, or suffering? Why or why not? In a mighty conflict, where competing interests are continually clashing and striving, who are the only ones who come away unscathed?

The Glory of God

We note that of none of these three horses is it said that they go forth conquering and to conquer. They simply are, and always will be. What are the implications of this for the Rider and His white horse? In practical terms, what should this mean for the Church during any period of history?

Glory to Glory

There will always be ugliness, sorrow, corruption, pain, and death on the earth. How does the presence of such things help to make the glory of God more obvious and, well, startling? What are the implications of this for your daily life (2 Cor. 3.12-18; 1 Cor. 10.31; Phil. 2.15)?

Memorize

Let's look more closely at our memory verses, Revelation 6.1, 2. Recite your memory verses aloud. Do so again, and as you do, express the confidence, hope, and energy these two verses suggest. Share your memory verse with a Christian friend today.

Closing Prayer

"What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the son of man that You take care of him?
You have made him a little lower than the angels;
You have crowned him with glory and honor,
And set him over the works of Your hands.

You have put all things in subjection under his feet."

For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

But we see Jesus...

Hebrews 2.6-9a

3 The Witnesses in Heaven

Week 5, Wednesday: Slain for the Word and testimony

At the same time events on earth are unfolding around the images suggested by Revelation 6.1-8, events in the timeless realm of heaven are also continuing. An altar appears in heaven, and under it are being gathered the souls of those who have been slain for the Word of God and their testimony. Let's make a point of remembering that this is an image and should be taken above all for its symbolic nature. The word "martyr" does not appear in this passage, although commentators can seem unable to avoid it. But avoiding it might be just the point.

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on Revelation 6.9-11

- 1. The life of faith is sometimes in Scripture represented as being a kind of sacrifice. Consider, for example, Psalm 84.1-4 and Romans 12.1 2. Even Jesus phrased discipleship in these terms (cf. Mk. 8.34, 35). Paul talks to believers who were very much alive in terms that suggest they had already "died" (cf. Rom. 6.8; 2 Tim. 2.11). Do Paul and the psalmists intend us to think that *every* believer should expect to die physically as a "martyr"? However, do the writers intend us to think about our lives in terms of being a sacrifice? What are the implications of this?
- 2. Heaven is a "timeless" place, even though it and its furnishings are described in "in-time" terms. There is an "altar" in heaven a timeless place of sacrifice. What does this represent, and why are souls "safe" "under" such an altar? Under the altar, under the Rider on the white horse: Do you see anything in these ideas to suggest how we ought to think about our relationship to the Lamb?
- 3. Those who have gathered under the altar in heaven are identified with two things: The Word of God and their testimony. What's the difference? Should this identity be one that all believers in the Lamb have in common? Why or why not?
- 4. In verse 10, those who are gathered under the altar appear to be looking forward to an event. What is it? They are clothed in a white garment, which is rather like a "uniform" identifying the "team" of which they are members. What "team" is that? How does Revelation 19.1-9 shed light on these questions?
- 5. Note that this "timeless" period of time in which the saints wait longingly for the end of things is described as a period of "rest" (v. 11). Rest from what (see on, Rev. 7.16, 17)? This suggests that "heaven" is a temporary place of rest until further events ensue. Do you think of heaven in this way? Should you? From your reading of Revelation, what follows in chapters 21 and 22 after the great climactic events of chapters 19 and 20? Is heaven the believer's final destination? Explain.

My Reflection

Meditate on Revelation 6.10. Do you share in this cry, this longing? Should you? Why or why not? In what ways?

The Glory of God

What is suggested about heaven by the presence of this altar and the saints' ability to appeal directly to the Lord with their concerns? How should we fit this together with the majestic, awesome, fearful, worship-inspiring vision of chapters 4 and 5? How does this help to remind us Who is the Centerpiece of heaven,

history, and our lives?

Glory to Glory

What will it mean for you today so to take the Word of God, and to live out your testimony, that your life becomes a living sacrifice for the Lord?

Memorize

Recite your memory verses aloud: Revelation 6.1, 2. Share them with a Christian friend. Talk about ways these verses are beginning to affect your understanding of your calling as a follower of the Rider on the white horse.

Closing Prayer
How lovely is Your tabernacle,
O LORD of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, even faints
For the courts of the LORD;
My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Even the sparrow has found a home,
And the swallow a nest for herself,
Where she may lay her young—
Even Your altars, O LORD of hosts,
My King and my God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
They will still be praising You.

Psalm 84.1-4

4 Who is Able to Stand?

Week 5, Thursday: A glimpse toward the end

The opening of the sixth seal reveals events at the end of time. All of history is moving toward this climax. Here we are given a glimpse at what will be more fully revealed in subsequent chapters of Revelation. But it is important, Jesus seems to think, that we have a sure sense of the end of all things, so that we might take our place with Him to "overcome" unto the end.

Read Revelation 6

Meditate on Revelation 6.12-17

- 1. According to Genesis 1.14, what is one of the primary functions of the sun and moon, as well as all the heavenly bodies? How do verses 12-14 lead us to think that this function and with it, time as we know it is coming to an end?
- 2. An earthquake accompanies the "dying" of time, and that will be terrifying to many. The earthquake that accompanied the opening of Jesus' tomb frightened those who were present, but what did that "shaking" of the earth portend (Matt. 28.1-6; cf. Hag. 2.6, 7)? What does this earthquake seem to proclaim?
- 3. How do the "great men" of the earth react to the events described in verses 12-14? Why (v. 17)? Is it our duty to warn people that this event is coming? Why or why not?
- 4. The people mentioned in verse 15 are "overcome" by the "wrath of the Lamb." They cannot stand before His face, and they cannot imagine that anyone else can. How would you answer the question posed at the end of verse 17?
- 5. We think of the Gospel as "Good News," and so it is. But just as the glory and beauty and goodness of Christ and His mission can only be fully appreciated against the backdrop on sinful men and a sinstained world, so the glory of His grace can only have its full impact against the backdrop of His wrath. What is the Gospel? Where does the "bad news" fit in with the "good news"?

My Reflection

Meditate on 2 Peter 3.10-13. Knowing what we do about the end of all things, what should we be doing to "overcome" until that time? How do you pursue this in your own walk with and work for the Lord?

The Glory of God

The complete sovereignty of God undergirds the events of Revelation 6.12-17. God is sovereign over all time, all creation, all peoples, and the final disposition of all things. Why do we need to know this? How can believers encourage one another with this truth?

Glory to Glory

In order to live for the glory of God we need to keep the end in sight at all times. Think of the people in your own <u>Personal Mission Field</u>, and of the obligations and opportunities that await you there. How should keeping the end in sight affect your prayers and other preparations to live for God's glory each day?

Memorize

Recite Revelation 6.1, 2. As you recite these verses, think about what you would like to say to the people in your Personal Mission Field – whether believers or unbelievers – about Christ, His mission, and your place in

it. Share your thoughts about this with someone today.

Closing Prayer

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Psalm 2.10-12

5 These Shall Stand!

Week 5, Friday: The chosen of the Lord

In chapter 7 our vision returns to heaven, where the worship we entered in chapters 4 and 5 is augmented yet again, and we learn of a "great tribulation" that is taking place on earth.

We also learn something new about the Lamb (v. 17), Who seems to be directing all that is happening in heaven, even as He rides forth conquering and to conquer on earth.

Read Revelation 7

Meditate on Revelation 7.1-9

- 1. Angels serve the purposes of God in various ways, as we learn from the Old Testament. Their particular focus is whatever conduces to the wellbeing of those on whom God has set His redeeming love (Ps. 91.9-13). How would you describe the work of the angels mentioned in verses 1-3? Do you think this is really possible? Don't things like this just "naturally" happen? Explain. Verse 3 seems to suggest that angels have something to do with "sealing" the "servants of our God." How should we understand this?
- 2. Verses 4-8 answer the question of 6.17. We're encouraged not to take this report "literally" but in a figurative way. How can you see that, for example, from the names of the tribes mentioned here, as well as the order in which they are mentioned? Which tribe is missing? Which tribe should have been listed first? Why was Judah mentioned first (cf. Gen. 49.8-11)?
- 3. A second reason to think figuratively about this report is the number 144,000. We've already seen that the Lord uses numbers in a figurative sense in Revelation. How have the numbers 7 and 3 been used? The number 4 in verse 1, as well as in Revelation 4.6, represents creation. What does the number 12 represent in the Old Testament? What about in the New Testament? The number 1,000 is a number of completion, so if we multiply 12 x 12 x 1,000, what does this number seem to suggest? How does the idea of these being "sealed" (the word occurs in vv. 3, 4, then for each tribe) also contribute to this idea?
- 4. Look at verse 9. John heard an announcement (v. 4); then, when he looked in the direction of what he heard, what did he see? Again, how does this help us to think about the answer to the question raised in Revelation 6.17?
- 5. What are these people wearing? Putting this together with Revelation 6.11, how does this help us further in understanding who this "great multitude" is? What's the significance of the palm branches in their hands (cf. Jn. 12.1-15)?

My Reflection

How would you describe the character of these people who are "standing before the throne and before the Lamb"? Review chapters 4-7. What are these people doing? How does this compare with your own worship?

The Glory of God

What is the "seal of the living God" (cf. Eph. 1.13, 14)? What is the effect of this "seal" being applied to a "great multitude"? How does this "seal" seem to relate to the Lamb and Him Who sits on the throne? How does this help you in thinking about our God?

Glory to Glory

Worship, holiness, the "seal" of God, and overcoming all seem to be related in chapters 2-7. In a single sentence, how would you describe the relationship between these ideas? How does this come to expression in your life?

Memorize

Review Revelation 6.1, 2. Write a prayer based on this verse and the sentence you wrote for the "Glory to Glory" section above.

Closing Prayer

You are fairer than the sons of men;

Grace is poured upon Your lips;

Therefore God has blessed You forever.

Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One,

With Your glory and Your majesty.

And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness;

And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;

The peoples fall under You.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;

A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

Psalm 45.2-6

6 Songs of Salvation

Week 5, Saturday: The reason for all this rejoicing

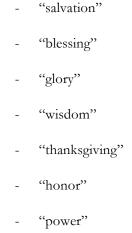
John wants to know who these people are who are worshipping God in such numbers, and with such vigor. It's important that we understand the answer to his question, because Jesus is using this vision of things in heaven to indicate to us the way He intends His Kingdom to come, conquering and to conquer, on earth as well.

No matter what we have to contend with along the way.

Read Revelation 7

Meditate on Revelation 7.9-12

- 1. Let's think a little more pointedly about the worship we've been participating in since chapter 4. We'll focus on what we see in these verses, with an eye to what we've already observed. First, how would you describe the *focus* of this worship? How do you see that? If you had to draw a picture of someone who was participating in this worship, where would his face be turned? What would it look like? What would he be thinking in his mind?
- 2. Now let's think about the *tone* or *atmosphere* of the worship we see here. How many different terms can you think of to describe the *atmosphere* of worship in these verses, and in chapters 4 and 5? How do you see that?
- 3. Finally, let's consider the *actions* of those who are worshipping. Describe their posture, what they're doing with their hands, mouths, and bodies. Taking together your observations from these first three questions, complete the following: "Jesus wants our worship on earth to reflect the worship we see in heaven. For me, this means..."
- 4. Clearly a relationship exists between what these worshippers *see*, what they are *wearing*, and how they participate in worship. What does this suggest about how your own worship might become more like what we've been observing in chapters 4-7?
- 5. The worship we see in these verses ascribes or attributes to God certain important matters. How would you explain each of the following?



- "might"

My Reflection

Review your answers to questions 1- 5. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 = Very much, how much of your own worship is a reflection of what you see here and in chapters 4-6? Why did you choose that number?

The Glory of God

Review the words and explanations from question 5. What must it be like to experience God in His glory, that doing so elicits such powerful worship as this? How can we prepare for worship – daily and weekly – in order to meet God in His glory?

Glory to Glory

How is your understanding of God, as the focus of worship, being affected by these studies in Revelation? Do you think this may be a primary reason for Jesus giving us this book? Why or why not?

Memorize

Recite Revelation 6.1, 2. Pray through these verses in the light of everything we've seen so far in Revelation 4-7. Make the words your words. Tell the Lord how you plan to live for, serve, and worship Him as you "ride forth" with Him each day.

Closing Prayer
Praise the LORD!
Praise the name of the LORD;
Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD!
You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.
For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,
Israel for His special treasure.
For I know that the LORD is great,
And our LORD is above all gods.
Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.

Psalm 135.1-6

7 The Lamb Their Shepherd

Week 5, Sunday: The flock of the Lord

Those who are worshipping before the throne of God and the Lamb are now more specifically identified. It is important that we get this right, for unless we do, we will not understand what to expect as we continue each day going forth to overcome with Jesus.

Read Revelation 7

Meditate on Revelation 7.13-17

- 1. Again, John emphasizes that these people standing before the throne and the Lamb are clothed in "white robes", thus tying them in with all the human worshippers we've seen thus far. How does the elder describe the experience of these people while they were on earth (v. 14)? So if this is a picture of *all* worshippers, *all* those who have been "sealed" by the Spirit and have "laid down their lives" for Jesus, how does this lead us to think about the time called "the great tribulation" (since *all* apparently have come from it cf. Jn. 16.33 and our study of Revelation 6.1-8)? What are the implications of this for how you prepare to "ride forth" with Jesus each day?
- 2. How is the Lamb described in verse 17? What is the effect on those who are sealed of His dwelling among them (vv. 16, 17)? Should Jesus' example of "shepherding" be instructive for shepherds during this time of tribulation? For us as sheep? In what ways?
- 3. The Shepherd, the Lamb, our overcoming King and Savior, leads us "to living fountains of waters" (v. 17). Look at John 7.37-39. Jesus leads us to this fountain to find refreshment, renewal, and life. What does this indicate? How does this work in your life?
- 4. So God, working through His angels, puts His Seal on us, and His Seal "advertises" to the world that we belong to God (on our foreheads, v. 3)? How does He do this? That is, as Jesus leads us deeper into the life of His Spirit, what should we expect (consider the following in your answer: Ezek. 36.26, 27; Jn. 16.8-11; Acts 1.8; Gal. 5.22, 23; 1 Cor. 12.7-11)?
- 5. How should we expect the Seal of God to be "on our foreheads" for all the world to see? Meditate on Jeremiah 23.3, 4 and Ephesians 4.11, 12. What should we expect of those appointed to shepherd us in helping us to "drink" of these "living waters"?

My Reflection

How is it evident that I have the Seal of God on my forehead? In what ways do I need to "drink" more deeply of the "living waters" to which the Lord is leading me?

The Glory of God

What are you learning about the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in bringing glory to God on earth as it is in heaven?

Glory to Glory

What can you do in order to become more consistent in drinking of the living waters of the Lord? Do you need to spend more time in His Word? Better time in His Word? More time in prayer? Talk with your spouse or a close Christian friend about these questions.

Memorize

Today, share your memory verses for this week (Revelation 6.1, 2) with a Christian friend, and briefly explain what you have learned about these verses.

Closing Prayer

As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?"

Psalm 42.1-3

Week 5: Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1. Summarize what you've learned concerning what's going on "in heaven" under the rule of the Lamb. Be as specific as you can.
- 2. Now summarize what we can expect on earth as we ride forth each day with King Jesus. What does it mean for us to lay down our lives in following Jesus? Again, the more specific you can be, the better you'll be able to prepare for each day of your walk with and work for the Lord.
- 3. How should we expect the Lord Jesus, Who dwells in our midst by His Spirit, to shepherd us in such a way as that our experience on earth should be more like that which we see in heaven? How does this work?
- 4. What are the most important lessons for you personally from Revelation 6 and 7? Summarize those lessons:
- 5. How are you beginning to implement those lessons in your walk with and work for the Lord?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Thank you.