

# Sabbath Day Meditations during Coronavirus Social Distancing

In Revelation 6, the apostle John describes the opening of the first six seals in his vision of the seven seals. These are depictions of the various judgments that God sends upon the earth as foreshadowings of the final judgment that will come at the end of history. They represent: the apparent victory of evil; warfare and violence; scarcity; disease and death; the persecution of Christians; and earth-shaking calamities that portend the world's coming doom.

John's vision of the opening of the seven seals provides us with the set of lenses through which we should be viewing our present crisis. Though there are a variety of secondary causes to this crisis, the ultimate cause is God. We are witnessing and experiencing the opening of the seals of the scroll, the scroll that is symbolic of God's comprehensive plan to bring judgment upon a rebellious world, even as he saves those whom he has graciously appointed to eternal life in Jesus Christ. In the words of one commentator, these things are the means "by which all who reject the sceptre of [Christ's] grace are either chastened, humbled, and deprived of their earthly supports, and so made sensible of their folly; or else, if incorrigible, by which they are punished, their opposition rendered futile and crushed out." [Ramsey, 320]

As I was reading Herman Bavinck's shorter systematic theology today (*The Wonderful Works of God*), I came across this quote in the section where he was reflecting on our first parents' sin in the Garden:

"True, death does not take place immediately after the transgression; it is even postponed for hundreds of years, for God does not abandon his intents with the human race. But the

life that is now granted man becomes a life of suffering, full of struggle and grief, a preparation for death, a continuous death. Man did not because of sin merely become mortal: he began to die. He dies constantly from the cradle to the grave. His life is nothing other than a short and vain battle with death." (238)

Gloomy words, to be sure. But they are true. There is no hope for us *in* this world. Yet hope has entered *into* the world in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those of us who believe in Christ have been set free from the deadly wages of sin and have received God's free gift of eternal life (see Rom. 6:23). Still, for now, we continue to live in a world that has been subjected to futility, and we groan within ourselves as we wait in hope for the glorious completion of our redemption (see Rom. 8:18-25)

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