

The Wrath of the Lamb

Text: Revelation 6:9-17

Introduction:

1. In chapter 6 we have the beginning of Daniel's 70th week and the commencement of the outpouring of God's wrath on the earth.
2. Remember! By this point, the church is not on earth. It is in heaven with Christ (Rev. 4-5). God has not appointed believers to this time of wrath (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10).
3. The key phrase in this chapter would be "the wrath of the Lamb" (Vs. 16). The same Lamb who gave Himself as a sacrifice for man's redemption will judge a rebellious world that rejects His offer of salvation. The "wrath of the Lamb" is imprinted across this whole chapter, indeed across this whole section of the Revelation. Heaven rules on earth with these judgments (see chart by Walvoord).

In this study, we will briefly review the first four seal judgments from our last sermon and then study the fifth and sixth seals in the rest of the chapter:

- I. **Seal # 1: A White Horse – Deceptions & a Deceiver (Vs. 1-2)**
- II. **Seal # 2: A Red Horse – Battles & Bloodshed (Vs. 3-4)**
- III. **Seal # 3: A Black Horse – Famine & Finances (Vs. 5-6)**
- IV. **Seal # 4: A Pale Horse – Death & Damnation (Vs. 7-8)**
- V. **Seal # 5: Martyrdom – Souls under the Altar (Vs. 9-11)**

Note: Remember these are not church age saints but tribulation saints; people who are saved in the tribulation period after the rapture of the church.

A. Their Position in Heaven (Vs. 9a)

1. These souls are pictured as being under the altar in heaven. The altar is based upon the O.T. imagery from the furniture of the tabernacle/temple.
2. The sudden appearance of these martyrs in heaven in the context of the previous seals reveals they come from the tribulation scene on the earth. They are martyrs from the first half of Daniel's 70th week. From the rest of the Book, it would appear this is the altar of incense rather than the altar of sacrifice which appears to be absent from heaven (See Rev. 8:3, 5, 14:17-18).

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3. Note: These cannot be martyrs from church history (the historical interpretation) as these souls are aware that their persecutors are still alive on the earth.
4. Note: This verse seems to indicate that saints in heaven have at least some knowledge of what is taking place on the earth.
5. Note: These verses refute the error of soul sleep. These souls are living and conscious in the presence of God in heaven.

B. Their Persecution on Earth (Vs. 9b)

The Bible specifies two reasons these believers lost their lives:

1. For their faithfulness to the Word of God
 - a. The world has always been hostile to the Word of God and down through the centuries it has pursued godly saints with Satanic ferocity.
 - b. In the tribulation, with Satan's man in control of world affairs, and the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit remove, to trust Christ will mean almost certain death.
2. For their faithfulness of their testimony for Christ
 - a. Many saints have perished in church history simply for their confession that Jesus Christ is their Lord and Saviour. The same will apply for the tribulation saints.
 - b. John 15:18-19 *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."*
 - c. 1 John 3:13 *"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."*

C. Their Prayer in Heaven (Vs. 10)

1. The confidence in their prayer
 - a. "holy and true" = they have complete confidence in the character of God and that justice will be done
 - b. "how long" = their question is not "why not" but "how long". They know judgment will be meted out on their persecutors but enquire as to why judgment is delayed. Their plea to God is in the form of a question. "The carefully stated appeal avoids the mistake of telling God what He must do and when He must do it." (Thomas)
2. The focus of their prayer
 - a. "judge and avenge our blood" = they are praying for God to administer justice for the crimes against them.
 - b. This prayer is appropriate as it is being prayed in heaven in the context of God's judgments being poured out on the earth. The prayer we pray on earth for our persecutors is "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (the prayer of Christ) or "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (the prayer of Stephen). See Matt. 5:44

D. Their Peace in Heaven (Vs. 11)

1. They are clothed – "white robes were given unto every one of them" Symbolic of the imputed righteousness of Christ. Could indicate that they are provided with a temporary body until they receive their

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- resurrected body.
2. They are comforted – “they should rest yet for a little season”
Heaven is a place of peace, comfort and rest for the departed saint.
We also learn a principle for prayer that sometimes God’s answer is “wait”.
 3. Note: We will still need the Lord’s ministry of comfort in heaven. We will cry in heaven initially which is why our Saviour will wipe our tears away.

VI. Seal # 6: Cosmic & Terrestrial Disturbances (Vs. 12-17)

“This seal marks a turning point in the judgments. The first 5 seals opened judgments that were related to man’s activities. Now we see God taking a direct part and intervening supernaturally in man’s affairs.” (Cloud)

A. The Release of the Disasters (Vs. 12-14)

1. Upheaval on Earth (Vs. 12a, 14b)
 - a. This is the first of 5 earthquakes recorded in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 8:5, 11:13, 19; 16:18).
 - b. It is designated as a “**great** earthquake” and we get a sense for its magnitude by its effect on the mountains and islands recorded in Vs. 14. The complete abolition of the mountains will come later at the seventh vial judgment (Rev. 16:20) but this represents an unprecedented shaking of the earth.
 - c. D. Cloud: “Great earthquakes not only destroy buildings and kill and injure large numbers of people, they also destroy infrastructure such as roads, bridges, communication towers, airport runways, and oil pipelines, thus creating massive problems beyond the initial destruction of life and property. The transportation of food and other goods is interrupted. Rescue work is hindered. There are fires caused by broken gas lines and downed electric wires. Earthquakes under the ocean can create tsunamis that bring further destruction of life and property.”
 - d. Imagine the tsunamis and volcanic eruptions that will come as a result of this massive earthquake.
 - e. Luke 21:25-26 *“And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; **the sea and the waves roaring**; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”*
(Note: these celestial disturbances are at the end of the tribulation whereas the ones in Rev. 6 occur in the first half of the tribulation)

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- f. Refer footage of Japan earthquake & tsunami (2011)¹
- 2. Upheaval in the Heavens (12b-14a)
Four events happen in the heavens:
 - a. The sun becomes black as sackcloth of hair, possibly on account of debris spewed into the atmosphere from the colossal earthquake on earth.
 - b. The moon takes on a blood-red appearance due to the darkening of the sun.
 - c. The stars of heaven fall to the earth indicating the earth is pounded by a very large meteor shower. According to Rev. 8:12, the primary stars themselves are still in place by the time of the fourth trumpet.
 - d. The heaven is split like a scroll when it is rolled together so that sinful man can see into the throne room of heaven. "Heaven will appear to split and roll back in two opposite directions."
(Thomas) The ultimate passing away of the heavens comes later (Rev. 21:1) but this is a foreshadowing of the end.

B. The Response to the Disasters (Vs. 15-17)

Look at the sad and shocking response of sinful man to the outpouring of the judgment of God:

- 1. A futile attempt to hide from God (Vs. 15)
 - a. Illustration: Adam and Eve tried to hide from God after they had sinned (Gen. 3:8). The answer is not to try and hide from God with our sin but to fall at His feet in repentance for our sin.
 - b. Notice that every level of society is affected. There is a 7-fold classification:
 - i. Kings – the highest rulers on earth, heads of state.
 - ii. Great men – men of power, position and prestige in the world.
 - iii. Rich men – the world's wealthy
 - iv. Chief captains – military generals and commanders.
 - v. Mighty men – the strong and influential
 - vi. Bondmen – slaves, lower classes
 - vii. Freeman – all other inhabitants of the earth
- 2. An empty prayer to the rocks and mountains (Vs. 16a)
 - 1. Rather than calling on Christ for salvation, they pray to the mountains and rocks!
 - 2. Their prayer to the rocks reveals a suicidal wish. They would rather die than face the awesome outpouring of the wrath of the Lamb. It reveals the foolish belief of man that somehow death equals the end and is therefore a means to escape God's

¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_5-IF5cAvA

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judgment. But in reality, death is merely a doorway into eternity and for the unrepentant sinner that means eternity in hell fire.

3. Walvoord: "As is often the case with desperate people, instead of availing themselves of the grace of God, they attempt to hide from His wrath by seeking death."
3. A startling recognition of the source of judgment (Vs. 16b-17)
 1. For the first time in human history, men on earth will be able to see into heaven and will be able to see the throne of God and the Lamb. They will know that this is the wrath of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being poured out upon them.
 2. It also dawns on their consciousness that the previous events on the earth leading up to this point (the horse judgments) were also the wrath of God. The phrase "has come" is in the aorist tense.
 3. "Who shall be able to stand?" – the answer is no unrepentant sinner can stand before the Lamb of God and escape His righteous wrath. Only those who stand clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness can stand in God's presence and escape judgment.
 4. Remember! The same Lamb who came the first time as Saviour will one day act as judge over a sinful and rebellious earth. Jesus Christ is a Lamb but He has horns (Rev. 5:6) and He is lionlike (Rev. 5:5) as well as gentle. Both these contrasting qualities merge in one Person.

Conclusion: The message of the Book of Revelation is clear; you can either accept God's gift of salvation today or face the certain wrath of the Lamb someday. You can either face the Lamb of God as Saviour or judge – the choice is yours! Instead of turning to nature and a vain and empty hope, turn to Christ the Creator and receive the free forgiveness He offers.