

4) Stars The description here has led some to see this as falling stars or meteors. Whatever, the celestial creation is affected like a fig tree which loses its figs before they are ripe. It is an untimely occasion. Great wind is involved.

5) Heaven Here is a vivid picture of the heavens being rolled out like a scroll (Luke 4:17). It creates a violent displacement of the earth's crust. Mountains and islands are affected.

NOTE: Many find it difficult to accept the literality of this picture. The fact the mountains are yet in their places later on in the Book is said to argue against a literal view. In any case, it is very likely that the literal view of action is right. If not, then it is still literal with affects on the earth dwellers in a symbolic way with these catastrophic results. The picture leaves no room for comfort!

b. It is concluded

This is the sad commentary on all that has taken place. With the seal broken and the events described, then what? Ah, this is the terrible thought. Three items are recorded:

1) Effect on world leadership Seven groups are mentioned here. It takes in all men. They hide themselves wherever possible to get away from the judgment of God.

2) Effect on world worship One would think that with these events of such magnitude taking place, there would be a world-wide repentance. Rather, men now pray to nature (!!!) to intervene for them against God (!!!). There is nothing so terrible as to come before God's presence without the blood of the Lamb!

3) Effect on world citizenship This is the time of the "great day of the wrath of God." This is exactly what Daniel predicted (12:1). Who can stand against it?

Conclusion These seals are not the end of God's judgment. There is more. This is just the beginning of events leading to the end. The great and terrible day of the Lord is yet to come! Beloved, these are facts we must face. If ever in our lives we ought to think seriously, it is now. Have you come to shelter your life under the blood of Christ forever? May your answer be an emphatic affirmation. Amen.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The Wrath of the Lamb"

Revelation 6:9-17

Introduction

1. Judgment which will take place during the Tribulation Period which will try the earth-dwellers (Rev. 4-19). The rapture has already taken place (Rev. 4:1). These are events which are on the earth after the church is in heaven with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

2. The first four seals are dreadful. They bring: 1) a false peace through war; 2) outright civil war; 3) famine; 4) pestilence of a variety of sorts ending in death. The four living creatures are involved in the announcements of these judgments (vv. 1-8).

3. Now comes more judgment from God. Here are insights into the way in which the Tribulation Period will affect two special groups of persons: saints and sinners. Hence, from the steeds of the first four seals, we now move to these groups for the next two seals. Study them!

1. FIFTH SEAL vv. 9-11.

Without assistance from another, the Lamb opens the fifth seal and reveals great sorrow. It is the occasion of manifesting martyrdom. How tragic! Look at the details

a. Who is involved?

It must be noted immediately that the church saints are already in glory. Hence, it cannot be them. True, martyrs have come from the church age. It is evidenced even today. But these are another group. These are post-rapture saints (cf. use of this same idea ["elect"] being present in the Tribulation Period in Matthew 24:22).

No end of difficulty has risen in that these persons are called "souls." This in no way suggests that the people are in oblivion or are non-existent or unconscious. Many verses teach conscious existence after death (Matt. 10:28; Luke 16:19-31; 20:38; 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23). There is true life after death and these persons are presented as alive, acting, and speaking. That they

are under the altar shows they were a sacrifice unto God and the Gospel of Christ.

b. Why saints involved?

The reasons given are explicit and without any cover up. Mark them:

1) Beca use of the Word of God. The Bible is the issue. Beloved, this is the point of conflict today. It will also be in the Tribulation Period. This has always been the problem. Is the Bible the Word of God? If it is, then it must be supported completely. This is the only single revelation from God. It will always be that way.

2) Because of the testimony held fast. It is true that the connective "and" may be concessive. In this sense, the present item would be an explicative of the former. However, it may well be something additional. If so, then the truth is that the believers slain had borne faithful open witness unto the Lord. This was a flagrant act in the face of the Antichrist. They died for their witness. The use of the definite article with "witness" suggests that some particular witness is in view. In any case, the death of these people is due to a spiritual issue and not another kind. The verb "hold" is really the imperfect tense of the verb "have." There was no compromise on the truth for them!

c. What saints prayed?

The One on the Throne is addressed by these martyrs. They cry with a loud voice. They describe God as being true and holy. This is fantastic in the light of their own death! They ask for respect in this matter of death. They appeal to the Lord as the Despot (so Greek). This sort of prayer is in keeping with the more legal aspects of the Tribulation Period and is like the imprecatory prayers of the Psalms (cf. Psa. 109). God's response to this prayer is twofold:

1) Justification Without referring to the wicked, the Lord notes that they (the martyrs) already have been given the white robes. These are indicative of imputed and imparted righteousness.

2) Expectation Others of their "fellow servants and brethren" were yet to be killed. That having been accomplished, the end would come. The matter of martyrdom was not ended with Nero! It will run right up to the end. The Devil and his crowd have always been out to destroy the Lord's own. As of now, our Lord allows it. The day of reckoning is coming! Meanwhile, the Lord appeals to the martyred to "rest" under the altar. What a word of consolation!

NOTE: This experience of martyrdom is predicted by our Lord as part of the runner up incidents prior to the second advent of our Lord (Matt. 24:9-13). The Olivet Discourse does not fit into the present age of grace; it properly belongs to the Tribulation Period.

2. SIXTH SEAL vv. 12-17.

Here is one of the most energetic revelations in all the Word of God. God's infinite grace is turned against here in a fashion not often displayed. Read the text and see the horror of it all. The whole is a picture of convulsion on earth. It is at once literal and symbolic. The end is chaos everywhere.

a. The description

Various segments of the earth are touched as the sixth seal is opened. Again, it is the Lamb Who makes the seal opening possible. Mark it:

1) Earthquake The Greek term here signifies a terrific "shaking". It is a general sort of earth movement. Reference to this in connection with the second advent is given elsewhere (Joel 2:10; Matt. 24:7). Similar events are described as God acted at other times (Ex. 19:18; 1 Kings 19:11; Matt. 27:50, 51; Acts 16:26).

2) Sun Rather than providing brightness, the sun is pictured here as being like a mourners garment with black cloth taken from a goat. Similar statements are made elsewhere in the Bible about the sun and divine events (Ex. 10:22; Isa. 33:9; Joel 3:9-15; Matt. 24:29, 30; Luke 23:44, 45).

3) Moon The moon changes colors and becomes like blood (Joel 2:30; Matt. 24:29).