**Revelation**

*Lesson 17 – Revelation 6:9-17*

* Tonight we continue looking at the seals that are on the scroll that Jesus the slain lamb is worthy to open and carry out God’s eternal, sovereign plan and we will finish this chapter by looking at the 5th and 6th seals.

*Verses 9-11*: The Fifth Seal

1. This is the first time the word “altar” occurs in the book of Revelation. This seal now leaves the 4 horseman who are carrying out God’s judgment on earth and takes us back to God’s throne room which is now described using temple language.
2. Beneath the altar in the Old Testament was were the blood of the sacrificial animals was poured out (Ex 29:12; Lev 4:7) and so under this altar is the life-blood of Christian martyrs. Now this isn’t only those who were killed but also for all Christians who have suffered and been persecuted for Christ’s sake. All Christian suffering and persecution whether it results in physical death or not is symbolized as martyrdom just as Christ is symbolized as the “slain Lamb.” There’s an identification with Christ.
3. These martyrs were killed (or suffered persecution) “for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.” In other words, they faithfully opened their mouths to testify about Jesus Christ and they received suffering and persecution, perhaps even to the point of physical death. This goes back to the 2nd seal – war – which primarily is about war against the saints. It does include other wars, but the primary focus is on the war of the world against the people of God and persecuting them.
4. And these saints are crying out to God for Him to take vengeance.
   1. O Sovereign God – The one who is in control is even in control over the sufferings and death of His dear children, both when and how they suffer and/or die
   2. Holy – The one who is in control is going to pour out His wrath and vengeance in order to right the wrongs that have been done to His children
   3. True – He’s said He is going to carry this out.
5. But these saints are growing restless and impatient as seen in their cry, “How long…”
6. Psalm 94:3 – “O LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked exult?”
7. Psalm 119:84 – “How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?”
8. Luke 18:7 – “And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?”
9. Now how do we square this type of prayer with Jesus’ words to pray for our enemies? This isn’t a prayer of personal revenge. These souls are no longer physically present on earth; they can’t take revenge against those who have killed them. This is a prayer for God to fully and finally reveal His sovereignty, His majesty, His holiness, His righteousness, and His justice. Romans 12:19 says, “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.’” (See Deut. 32:35)
10. From our perspective, God’s justice and vengeance seems delayed and we want it to come forth now. But in verse 11, God tells this martyred saints to rest and wait until the full number of God’s elect are brought into the kingdom.
11. But while they are waiting, notice that these saints receive a white robe.
12. Revelation 3:4-5 – “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and **they will walk with me in white**, for they are worthy. The one who conquers **will be clothed thus in white garments**, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.”
13. Revelation 7:9 – “After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, **clothed in white robes**, with palm branches in their hands,”
14. To have a white garment means that you were faithful to Jesus while on Earth and persevered to the very end even at the cost of your life.
15. “To them is given the assurance that their prayers will be answered but the time for the judgment day has not yet arrived. Thus these souls of the martyrs must enjoy their heavenly repose [rest] for a little time until every elect one has been brought into the fold and the number of the martyrs is full. God knows the exact number. It has been fixed from eternity in His decree. Until that number has been realized on earth the day of final judgment cannot come.” –William Hendricksen

*Verses 12-17*: The Sixth Seal

1. This 6th seal is the day of the Lord (See Zech 9-14) come. But the focus the angle this seal takes is the judgment that Jesus brings with Him to avenge His people for their suffering and persecution at the hands of godless people. So the 6th seal is God’s answer to the cries of His people in the 5th seal.
2. This judgment is described in 2 aspects – Cosmic phenomenon then the cries of the wicked on Earth.
3. Cosmic language: Great Earthquake, Sun becomes Black, Moon becomes like Blood, Stars fall to Earth, Sky Vanishes, Mountains/Islands Removed
4. Ezekiel 38:19-20 – “For in my jealousy and in my blazing wrath I declare, On that day there shall be a **great earthquake** in the land of Israel. **20**The fish of the sea and the birds of the heavens and the beasts of the field and all creeping things that creep on the ground, and all the people who are on the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence. And **the mountains shall be thrown down**, and the cliffs shall fall, and every wall shall tumble to the ground.”
5. Joel 2:10-11 – “The **earth quakes** before them; the heavens tremble. The **sun and the moon are darkened**, and the **stars withdraw their shining**. The LORD utters his voice before his army, for his camp is exceedingly great; he who executes his word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very awesome; who can endure it?”
6. Matthew 24:29-30 – “Immediately after the tribulation of those days **the sun will be darkened**, and the **moon will not give its light**, and **the stars will fall from heaven**, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **30**Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”
7. Isaiah 34:4 – “All the host of heaven shall rot away, **and the skies roll up like a scroll**. All **their host shall fall,** as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.”
8. It’s not chance that there are 6 cosmic items mentioned in this 6th scroll. 6 represents man’s number and 666 represents man’s blasphemous attempt (instigated by Satan) to be like the triune God. So the 2nd Coming and the great day of the Lord’s wrath against wicked humanity occurs in the 6th seal and there are 6 creational items that happen when the universe crashes under the weight of the presence of Jesus in His great wrath.
9. “Phenomena in the heavens indicate the shaking of the old order of the first creation, in preparation for the coming of the new creation.” –Vern Poythress
10. “What we have here is a symbolic picture of the terror of the judgment day. The symbol, taken as a whole, teaches just one lesson, namely, that the final and complete effusion of God’s wrath upon a world that has persecuted the Church will be terrible indeed.” –William Hendricksen
11. Responses from 7 types of people are given which suggests that this is God’s complete and perfect judgment on the wicked: kings, great ones, generals, rich, powerful, slave, and free
12. If you compare verse 14 and verse 15 then obviously you have to take this picture symbolically. How can people hide behind mountains that have already been removed? How can they call to the mountains if the mountains have been removed?
13. The entire godless world is seized with fear and trembling and they cry out for death in order to hide or escape from God’s great judgment day.
14. Hosea 10:8 – “The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed. Thorn and thistle shall grow up on their altars, and **they shall say to the mountains, “Cover us,” and to the hills, “Fall on us**.”
15. Isaiah 2:19 – “And people shall enter **the caves of the rocks** and the holes of the ground, from before the **terror of the LORD**, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth.
16. Psalm 76:7 – “But you, you are to be feared! **Who can stand** before you when once your anger is roused?”

**Message for Us**

1. Regarding the 5th seal:
   1. “Although the picture focuses specifically on martyrs, it applies to all faithful believers. Jesus calls on all His followers to surrender their life in order that they may gain eternal life (Matt. 16:24-26; Lk 9:23-26; Jn 12:25).” –Vern Poythress
   2. “If Christ died upon the cross, bearing God’s wrath for our sin, then it is sacrilege for us to hold anything back from Him. And the scandal is that people who are living not for themselves but for Christ—those whose lives are a fragrant offering to God—are the very people hounded, persecuted, and butchered by the world.” –Joel Beeke
   3. “The assurance that God will unquestionably punish the evil world becomes a motivation for Christians to persevere in their witness through suffering on earth, knowing that they are key players in helping establish the kingdom in the same ironic fashion as their Lord.” –Greg Beale
2. Regarding the 6th seal:
   1. Sinners “have committed themselves wholly to something in this creation, whether to political, economic, or social idolatries. In contrast to Christians who are pilgrims on the earth and whose citizenship is in heaven, the ungodly earth-dwellers are at home in the present world order, men of earthbound vision, trusting in earthly security and unable to look beyond the things that are seen and temporal. The unbelievers’ idol-refuge, the earth, must be removed because it has been made impermanent by the pollution of their sin, but the eternal home of believers with their God will remain.” –Greg Beale
   2. “The wrath of the Lamb is indeed terrifying to those who have rejected Him and scorned His love. There is nothing more frightening than the face of perfect love turned against you. That is what the day of judgment is all about. When God judges the world, He will judge through the Man He has appointed, His Son, Jesus Christ. The very Jesus who went to the cross to die for sinners will be in charge on the day of judgment. Unbelievers will plead to be delivered from the wrath of the Lamb. How horrible it will be to be damned by Him who came to save sinners!” –Joel Beeke
   3. “Ultimately, the only thing that matters is that we are on the right side of Jesus. The only thing that matters is that you and I are able to look Him in the face on the day of judgment, clothed in His white robes of righteousness. Ultimately, it does not matter what kind of a nest we have made for ourselves in the short time we are here on earth. The only thing that matters is how we are related to Him.” –Joel Beeke