

The Sky is Falling

Revelation 6:9-17

(preached Pine Grove 2/5/17; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Revelation...

We will finish up chapter 6 today with 2 more seal judgments being unleashed upon the earth..

The 5th and 6th seals will be removed from the scroll that serves as the title deed to the earth...

Let's read about this beginning in Revelation 6:9-17...

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O [k]Lord, holy and true, [l]will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as

*sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the [m]commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the [n]presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”*

Let us pray.

My dad was always my greatest defender.

Though he wasn't loud and arrogant, I always knew as a kid that no one would bother me when he was around...

Now, I never called on him to settle disputes..

That would ruin your reputation as a teenager, but I knew that if I needed him, he would be there and he would defend no matter the cost..

Now that I am a dad, I completely understand my father's willingness to defend me..

I was his child..

No one was going to mess with me without feeling the wrath of my dad..

All I had to do was ask my dad for help and he was coming...

As we look to the end of time and how God will bring this world to an end, a great question arises in our minds...

What will it take for God to finally bring his wrath upon the earth?

What will it take for God to have reached the point of having enough?

Just look at our current world..

It's a mess...

Children growing up in drug infested homes...

Terrorists killing people in the name of a false god...

Sexual sin growing unrestrained in the world...

In our limited thinking, we wonder why hasn't God raptured the church out already and began to open the seals already...

So we ask..

What holds him back, and what will be the event that triggers God to end it all?

Well, we find that answer today in sixth chapter of Revelation, and the short answer is that God will be moved to unleash his wrath when his children call for Him to do it...

As we look at that this morning, let us remind ourselves of God's great love for us..

Yes, He is holy...

Yes, He is just...

Yes, He is righteous...

But let us never forget that our God is a great Father set to defend his people in the world because of his great love for them...

Though God is many things, he is a great Father set to defend His people against all sorts of evil, and there may

be no greater example of that than what we see in Rev 6...

Let's begin in verses 9-11 with....

I. Seal #5: The Prayers of the Martyrs (9-11)

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

As we jump into verse 9, we find ourselves in the midst of judgments that God is sending upon the earth...

John the apostle was an old man on the island of Patmos when he was visited by a resurrected Jesus in the last part of the 1st century...

In this visit, Jesus wanted John to write down the things that were, the things that are, and the things will be...

In chapter 1 of Revelation, John recorded the things that were by giving us the details of his situation and visit by Christ...

In chapters 2-3, John wrote about the things that are as he recorded what Jesus had to say to 7 churches that existed in John's day..

Once those messages were sent, John began chapter 4 by writing about the things that will be, as John was carried to a future time in heaven to see the things going on in heaven before God unleashes his wrath on an unbelieving world...

So for chapters 4 and 5, we were taken to a future day in heaven to see who and what are happening there as the world draws to an end..

We saw the worship there, the praise there, the church there, the angels there, the signing there, and the Lamb and the One seated on the throne there...

And then last week, we left heaven for 8 verses to come to a future time on the earth...

As four seals were removed from the scroll by the Lamb...

And each seal brought judgment to the earth due to their rejection of Christ...

The first seal was a false peace that came on a white horse ridden by a false Christ, most likely the Antichrist....

That seal was followed by seal #2, where we saw a red horse and rider who brought worldwide war to the earth..

The 2nd seals gave way to the 3rd seal, where a black horse and rider led to a great famine on the earth, where you had to work a whole day to feed your family for a day...

And the final judgment we saw last week was the pale green horse of the 4th seal that brought death to 25% of the world's population through war, famine, disease, and wild animal attacks...

And we stopped right there to take a breath...

Well today, we will watch the 5th and 6th seal be removed, and for the 5th seal we take a trip back to heaven...

Where the Lamb breaks the 5th seal and John sees under the altar of heaven, the souls of those killed for their faith in Jesus Christ...

Now, we need to answer a couple questions here...

Who are these people and when were they martyred for their faith...

And then why is this a judgment upon the world?

First, let's figure out who these people are...

Well, when the rapture takes place and all true Christians are taken away to heaven in an instant, there will be some people left behind who will instantly recognize their lostness in the instant it happens...

Bibles will also be left behind upon the earth, and those familiar with Christianity will begin to read and understand what has happened...

Though I don't think it will be a great number of people at this point, it will be a sizable number of people who hung around the church but never were part of the church...

Well, many of these people will finally realize that what they had heard all their lives was the truth, and many will get saved in the days after the rapture...

They will then become a loud voice to their neighbors telling them that the Bible is truth...

That they should have paid more attention to it....

But the world will still have no time for their preaching...

Besides in their mind, the world is better off without Christians...

Some will even begin to say...

“Look, now that the Christians are gone, we finally have world peace.”

And so the call to kill Christians may grow louder in the early part of the tribulation period...

And I believe many will be killed even in the time of world peace...

But then as wars break out, many Christians will be blamed for them or the famine, and Christian persecution will rise and the number of people killed for their faith will skyrocket...

Now, that leads to an important truth about the tribulation period....

There will be salvation in it...

Gentiles and Jews will be saved in it, but it will come with a heavy price tag to follow the Lord in those days...

And so as these people are saved in the tribulation and then martyred, they go to heaven...

Now, here is what is interesting...

Everyone else on heaven will have a body...

At the rapture of the church, Jesus brings those who died before the rapture with Him and their bodies rise from graves all over the earth and are joined to their souls...

The people alive on earth at the time of the rapture have their mortal bodies changed into immortal bodies in the twinkling of an eye as they rise to heaven..

And so the church that John sees in heaven all have bodies, and I think that is why John says that he sees the souls of those martyred for their faith below the altar of God...

They have just arrived in heaven...

Now in verse 11, these souls will be given a robe, which suggests to me that God will give them a temporary body until he gives them a new body at the beginning of the 1000 year reign at the end of tribulation...

And so you have you these martyrs that were killed in the tribulation period, and what are they doing in heaven?

Verse 10...

10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O [k]Lord, holy and true, [l]will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

The martyrs of the tribulation period are calling for God to avenge their deaths upon the earth...

They had been killed by ungodly people and as they arrive in heaven, so they ask God to judge their killers...

And notice the response of God in verse 11..

11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

I think it is interesting that God doesn't rebuke them for their request...

He doesn't correct them for asking to avenge their death...

Instead, he rewards their faithfulness to hold to their faith until death by giving them a white robe...

He tells them to rest and wait until more Christians are martyred in the tribulation....

God is not telling them that he won't avenge their death...

He is simply saying...

Just be patient until the full number of martyrs is complete, and then I will go and pour out my wrath on all their killers...

This is the loving Father that we have...

Up until this point in the tribulation, it has been bad, but it is about to get much worse...

Up until this point, most of the death is a result of the evil actions of men....

War, famine, even disease could all be attributed to natural man made causes...

But when the 6th seal opens, God is about to intervene in the world...

Though 25% of the world is dead, the world hasn't seen anything yet...

The full fury of the wrath of God is about to be poured out from heaven in the 6th seal, the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls of God's judgment....

And the cause of God unleashing such destruction is the call of the martyrs in Revelation 6:10...

God is about to become the loving Father who comes to the scene to defend his children who cry out for his help...

Do be deceived, God is not mocked...

What men sow, they will reap...

And the world has mocked God long enough...

But worse yet, they have mocked his children long enough...

They have sowed out scorn and ridicule upon the people of God for years, and the fifth seal of judgment is this....

God decides to answer the cries of his children and avenge their blood that was shed by his enemies...

The unbelieving, God-rejecting, Jesus-hating, Christian-attacking world is about to reap all that it had sowed for centuries on the people of God...

And all it took was for God's children to cry out for his protection...

So, let's see how God responds to their cries...

We leave the 5th seal in verse 11 and head to the 6th seal in verse 12...

II. Seal #6: The Power of the Messiah (12-17)

Verse 12...

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

In case you may have forgotten since last week, Jesus also described these seal judgments in exact order as he taught the disciples about the end times...

Luke 21:7-11

7 They questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the [f]sign when these things are about to take place?" 8 And He said, "See to it that you are not misled; for

many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not go after them. 9 When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately."

Things to Come

10 Then He continued by saying to them, "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, 11 and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great [g]signs from heaven.

The sixth seal is often described in the Bible as the great and awesome and terrible Day of the Lord...

The Day of the Lord kicks off with the events of the 6th seal, but it carries forwards many days into the future and lasts until the end of tribulation with the second coming of Christ...

And the major event that comes after the removal of the 6th seal is an earthquake...

But this is no ordinary earthquake...

It isn't local or regional, it is a global earthquake...

Entire plates will shift and rub together...

Mountains will fall...

Seas will rise...

Islands will disappear with higher water levels...

Nations will split....

It will be off the Richter scale in strength...

It will trigger volcanic eruptions...

Fires will result from all the destruction...

The resulting dust and ash and smoke will most likely cause the sun to go dark...

Or maybe God supernaturally darkens the sun....

The moon takes on a red appearance through all the haze and dust that will last for days and months....

On top of the global earthquake...

Stars will fall from heaven...

This could take the form of asteroids and large meteor showers...

You may remember this but in 1989, a half mile wide asteroid missed the earth by only 6 hours...

It was never even noticed until it was less than a day away, which would have been way too late anyway...

The close call inspired movies like Deep Impact and Armageddon that were based on a killer asteroid speeding to earth, and people on earth figuring out how to stop it...

One day, those fictional movies will be a reality for the earth in the tribulation period...

So as they deal with worldwide earthquakes, a dark sun and red moon, they will also be on the lookout for objects falling from the sky..

Then on top of that, the sky will roll up like a giant scroll...

You ever had a newspaper that is delivered all rolled up and held together by a rubber band...

You take the band off and unroll the paper out on your desk to read it while you eat breakfast, but once you take your hands off either end to grab a bite, it rolls back up...

So you sit a drink on one side of it and your plate on the other side to keep it open...

The sky will roll up in similar fashion to a rolled up newspaper...

What will this be like?

I am not sure if I know...

Why will this occur?

Maybe it will allow men to see the source of these disasters, which is the Lamb standing in heaven removing the seals on the scroll..

Maybe God will roll back the sky to reveal a world that the sky has hidden from the sight of men...

Maybe the rolling back of the sky will reveal the glory of God to the sinful men upon the earth...

In fact, that is what I think is the purpose of this rolling back of the sky because look at what we see in verse 15...

15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the [m]commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the [n]presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the

great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

As the sky rolls back and the heavens open, men upon the earth see the presence of God on his throne, and the wrath of the Lamb...

And they take off running to hide...

So, the question comes...

Well, how did they know that God was responsible for the earthquake, the meteors, the dark sun, the red moon?

Unless he opened the sky to give them a glimpse of His glory and wrath being poured out?

To me, this makes the most sense...

And don't miss the irony of what is happening here...

These are the great men of earth...

Kings, military commanders, warriors, the rich, the powerful...

These are the people running to hide themselves in caves and under rocks that have been formed when the mountains fell...

And what are these mighty men running from?

They are running from the wrath of the Lamb...

You can't help but see the irony of such a statement...

Men afraid of a Lamb...

They aren't running from a tiger or a wild dog or a huge army...

They are running from a harmless Lamb, standing in heaven opening up a scroll...

The mighty men of the world who are afraid of nothing and no one will run for the safety of the rocks when the sky is rolled back and the Lamb is revealed...

Let's end this morning with some things we learn from verses 9-17 of Revelation 6...

Conclusion

#1 - The tribulation period is the undoing of creation.

I want you to look at some verses in Genesis 8...

20 Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said [k]to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the [l]intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again [m]destroy every living thing, as I have done.

22

*"While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease."*

After the worldwide flood had ended and the waters had receded, God made a promise to Noah and to the whole earth...

He would never destroy the earth and every living creature by flooding the earth again..

The rainbow in the sky would be a sign of His vow to never do that again...

But I want you to notice what God says here in verse 22..

***“While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”***

What is that a promise of?

It a promise of stability and predictability on earth...

God promised the season to remain fairly predictable, along with planting and harvesting season...

You see, the earth was seen as a very violent and unpredictable place after the flood...

Noah and his sons and their descendants would probably worry about more worldwide disasters after a global event like the flood...

So God assures them...

No, there will be no more worldwide floods, and on top of that, there will be normal patterns of days and months and years...

And that has been the case on the earth since that promise to Noah...

Sure, there have been local disasters, but nothing ever global in its destruction...

But all that ends in the tribulation period...

The sun becomes black, the moon becomes red, and all the asteroids that God has steered away from the earth will be steered toward the earth...

The rocks of the mountains that never move will be jarred from their locations and the islands of the seas will shift...

And the reason for this reversal of the predictability of nature is to show the power of God over the planet...

Men and women live with such a high opinion of themselves, telling us all to live in such a way to save the planet...

Look, I fully support good stewardship and care for our world, but I am under no illusions that I can do one thing to extend the life of this planet one day or hour beyond what God has planned for it...

To think that we can save this planet is the height of arrogance because God decides to take back this planet, the kings of the earth....

The mighty me not the earth...

The arrogant scientists of the earth won't stand a chance...

Instead of hugging the trees, they will be hiding under the rocks begging for mercy from God...

Tribulation undoes the created order to point to the One who is truly in control of this earth..

#2 - The tribulation period is the undoing of Christian persecution.

In the book of Psalms, there are two psalms, 37 and 73, that speak of the apparent prosperity of the wicked...

And all of us true believers at times struggle with idea that the bad guys win in this world at times...

So, the David in Psalm 37 writes about this frustration to God when he sees the wicked winning and the righteous suffering...

But in the middle of his writing about it, he remembers an important truth...

The wicked's success and prosperity doesn't last...

Psalm 37:12-15

12

***The wicked plots against the righteous
And gnashes at him with his teeth.***

13

***The Lord laughs at him,
For He sees his day is coming.***

14

***The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.***

15

***Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.***

As this psalm teaches, the wicked's persecution of the righteous will one day come to an end..

And that end is found in the book of Revelation...

As the murdered Christians cry out to God to avenge their blood, God hears and begins to unleash his fury against the wicked...

Psalm 37 says that the bow that they have used to injure the saints will be turned around on them...

The sword that they used to chop off the heads of the martyrs will be used to pierce their own hearts...

The lesson for us is this...

Endure suffering...

Keep the faith...

Dont take vengeance into your own hands, leave it in God's hands and trust him to avenge your suffering in His time...

When you fight back, you do it out of pride...

When you are patient and let the Lord fight for you, you show your trust in Him...

People who return evil for evil show they lack trust in God...

They figure He will forget, but that is not the case.

God will have the final say, and all Christian persecution will end in God perfect time...

One final lesson to take from these verses..

#3 - The tribulation period is the undoing of anyone who has rejected Christ.

We have already learned this truth before, but please look at the final verse this mooring in Revelation 6:17...

The rich, the powerful, the kings of the earth hide themselves simply say this..

“The great day of God’s wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Here are the most powerful people of the world who have all the answers..

Here are the people of the world with all the resources to find all the solutions...

Here they are in the end of time, and they are out of answers..

The world is falling down around them, and they arrive at the answer to a question that they needed long ago...

And the answer is this...

No one can withstand the wrath of God...

No one.

But the good news this morning is that Christ has taken on God's wrath for everyone who will believe in Him..

Jesus endured something much worse than 7 year's tribulation on our behalf...

Jesus endured God's wrath toward sin...

Jesus stood in the place of guilty sinners on the cross as God's wrath was poured out on Him...

And for those who will give up their sin and trust in Christ, God will save them from his wrath over sin...

He will pardon and forgive, and I believe he will also rescue those from the wrath that is coming in tribulation...

Believe upon Christ today.

Turn from your sin..

Spare yourself from the wrath of hell, and secure your place in heaven..

Today is the day to escape the wrath of God...

First, his wrath over sin, but also his wrath that is coming to everyone alive when the tribulation begins...

I will tell you....

You can't hide under a rock hoping not to see God's wrath in the days of tribulation, and you can't hide under a rock hoping to escape God's wrath toward sin if you die without Christ...

Today is the day to run to the Lamb, so that His wrath isn't poured out on you in the future...

Let us pray.