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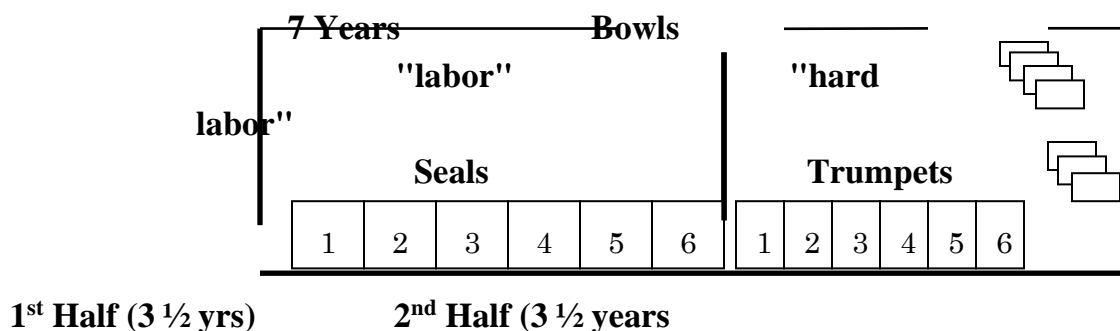
**A0542 – October 16, 2005 – Revelation 6:9-17 – Martyrs and a Great Shaking**

Last week the 1<sup>st</sup> of seven seals were opened by the Lamb. This is therefore His wrath and since church saints are exempt from eschatological wrath (1 Thess 5:9-10) the church has already been removed from earth (Rev 3:10). So, the sequence of events so far is the following:

1. The Church Age (Rev 2-3)
2. The Church Removed by Pre-Trib Rapture (1 Thess 4:13-18; 5:9-10; Rev 3:10; et. al.)
3. The Antichrist Signs Peace Covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27)
4. The Beginning of Birth Pangs (Rev 6)
  - a. 1<sup>st</sup> Seal:        White Horse: Peaceful Conquest (6:1-2)
  - b. 2<sup>nd</sup> Seal:        Red Horse:    Warfare and Bloodshed (6:3-4)
  - c. 3<sup>rd</sup> Seal:        Black Horse: Famine (6:5-6)
  - d. 4<sup>th</sup> Seal:        Green Horse: Death to ¼ of world's population (6:7-8)

The first six seals correspond to what Jesus called “the beginning of the birth pangs” in Matt 24:8. These six seals are opened sequentially. For example, the first seal is opened, judgment is poured forth on the earth, and then the judgment ends. The second seal is then opened, judgment is poured forth on the earth, and then the 2<sup>nd</sup> judgment ends and on and on. The six seals will cover most if not all of the first half of the tribulation. The trumpet judgments are also sequential like the seals. One begins and ends before the next begins. The bowls are different. While they start sequentially, the next judgment begins before the prior ends so that the bowl judgments are a tremendous intensification of God's wrath as the world nears the climax of the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (Joel 2:31; Mal 4:5).

**70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel 9**  
**2 Divisions of Birth Pangs**



God is sending these judgments on earth because He is holy. His character is one of absolute purity and He is set apart from sin. John said it this way, “God is light and in Him is no darkness, not even a bit” (1 John 1:5). The entire book of Leviticus is designed to teach us the holiness of God. Since God is holy and mankind and fallen angels are sinful God must remove them from the earth before He can fulfill His covenants to Israel, install the King on David’s throne in Jerusalem and establish His kingdom of righteousness.

The first step in accomplishing this program are the first six seals. The 1st seal is a white horse with a rider carrying a bow without arrows. This is a personification of many antichrists (Matt 24:4) carrying out a concerted effort to bring about peaceful military conquest or coup d’etat. Before they go forth they are given a crown signifying victory in advance. They go forth for a period of time “conquering” with the ultimate goal “to conquer” determinatively.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> seal is a red horse signifying warfare and bloodshed. This is a time of war, internal strife and international discord. At this time, peace will be taken from the earth, there will be military warfare on a global scale unlike any thing the world has ever seen. Men slaying one another refers to God’s enemies destroying one another.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> seal is a black horse signifying mourning and lamentation. The rider carries a pair of scales signifying famine. Famine is one of the aftermaths of war. The world has seen famine but never on this scale. This is a global famine, not a local famine. At this time a person can work all day to earn enough money to purchase one meal of nutritional value. If a man has a family he will probably purchase barley even though barley is lower in

nutritional value. At least it will fill the tummy of his family but they will inevitably begin to starve, their bellies will be distended, and their immune systems will begin to fail opening them up to disease.

The 4<sup>th</sup> seal is a pale-green horse signifying death. The color reminds us of a decaying corpse in the later stages. The intensity of this seal increases beyond human comprehension with this seal; death to ¼ of the human population. At present the population is near 6.5 billion and more than 1.5 billion people would be killed by means of sword, which symbolizes warfare, famine, increased beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> seal, pestilence, which is one of the aftermaths of warfare and famine, and finally, beasts of the earth who are searching to prey upon the weak and defenseless. Let's pick up in verses 9-17 with the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> seals

**Revelation 6:9-17** 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; <sup>10</sup> and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> 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; <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. <sup>14</sup> The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. <sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the 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; <sup>16</sup> and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

## Chapter Outline

- I. The First Six Seals: "The Beginning of Birth Pangs" (Rev 6)
  - A. 1<sup>st</sup> Seal: Peaceful Conquest (6:1-2)
  - B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Seal: Warfare and Bloodshed (6:3-4)
  - C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Seal: Famine (6:5-6)
  - D. 4<sup>th</sup> Seal: Death to ¼ of Human Population (6:7-8)

- E. 5<sup>th</sup> Seal: Martyrs Under the Altar (6:9-11)
- F. 6<sup>th</sup> Seal: A Great Earthquake and Cosmic Disturbances (6:12-17)

## I. The First Six Seals: “The Beginning of Birth Pangs” (Rev 6)

### E. 5<sup>th</sup> Seal: Martyrs Under the Altar (6:9-11)

*Revelation 6:9 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, even because of the testimony which they had maintained;<sup>10</sup> and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"<sup>11</sup> 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.*

As with the first four seals the Lamb breaks the 5<sup>th</sup> seal. Since He is breaking the seals it is His wrath and not Satan's. Interestingly, the 5<sup>th</sup> seal is not a judgment released on the earth but is a vision in heaven of tribulation saints that *had been slain because of the word of God even because of the testimony which they had maintained* during the first four seals. Some commentators suggest that the 5<sup>th</sup> seal is a judgment of God released upon the earth producing the martyrdom of these *souls*. Thus, God's wrath is released on the redeemed. However, none of the seal judgments are God's wrath against the redeemed, they are God's wrath against the earth dwellers. It is obvious from the context that these martyrs were not killed by God but by the earth dwellers. Notice the martyrs cry of verse 10, “*and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*” Thus, it is the earth dwellers who have slain them and they are calling out to the Lord to judge and avenge their brutal murders.

The souls under the altar are not mentioned in Jesus' Olivet Discourse during the “beginning of birth pangs” because the disciples asked about signs that could be *observed* that would signal the end of the age and Christ's coming (cf Matt 24:3). Since the 5<sup>th</sup> seal takes place in heaven it could not be *observable* by those on earth. Thus, Jesus omits any reference to this seal in the beginning of the birth pangs (cf Matt 24:4-8). However, Jesus does include the 6<sup>th</sup> seal judgment in the “beginning of birth pangs” in Luke's account (cf 21:11).

*Location of the Souls.* The location of these martyrs is significant. John sees them ***underneath the altar***. They are not on earth, they are in heaven ***underneath the altar***. In Rev 4-5 we saw the heavenly throne room of God. Here we see the heavenly ***altar*** which is in the ***heavenly temple***. Heaven is often spoken of in terms of a ***sanctuary or temple*** (Rev 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5, 8; cf Heb 9:24). The ***altar*** here is probably the golden altar of incense which is connected with the prayers of saints throughout Revelation.

*Doctrine of Departed Souls.* There are two significant observations here. First, the doctrine of departed souls: departed souls do not wander but go immediately to one of two places. If you recall the 4<sup>th</sup> seal, a pale green horse, and riding him was Death, and Hades followed with him. At physical death the soul of an unbeliever is taken immediately to Hades (aka Sheol). The departed souls of unbelievers do not wander. Nor do the departed souls of believers wander either. They go immediately to heaven. Many people think they have contacted a departed loved one. This is simply impossible. Departed souls do not wander. The soul of an unbeliever goes immediately to Hades and the soul of a believer goes immediately to heaven. Your experiences must be interpreted by the word of God and not vice versa. The word of God indicates that if you've had some kind of experience like this then you actually contacted a demon, not your departed loved one.

*Tribulation Saints.* Second significant thing about these souls ***underneath the altar*** is that it shows that although the church has been removed from the earth a new group of people have believed in Jesus Christ and have been saved. We will call these people "tribulation saints". They are clearly not church saints. The church is not symbolized by any figure in Rev 4-18. So, a new group of believers have emerged from the earth-dwellers left behind after the pre-trib Rapture.

***the souls underneath the altar*** has caused exegetical difficulties. The ***soul*** has a wide range of meaning but in its most basic sense it refers to the life of a person. Some want to support an intermediate body between death and resurrection by this verse. They argue that a ***white robe*** is given to them and a ***white robe*** cannot clothe that which is immaterial. However, this probably pushes the symbolism too far. I'll discuss this more under the ***white robes*** of verse 11.

*Reason for Martyrdom.* The reason for these Tribulation saints martyrdom is two fold; 1) ***because of the word of God*** and 2) ***because of the testimony which they had maintained***. However, the conjunction ***and*** (*kai*) is ascensive (cf Rev 1:2, 9) and therefore should be translated ***even***. Thus, this is really one reason given and then defined. In other words, ***the word of God*** here is defined as ***the testimony***, namely, their ***testimony*** of Jesus. Despite

tremendous persecution during the Tribulation these saints maintain their *testimony* of Jesus. As a result, the earth dwellers do not tolerate them but execute them. The pressure to deny Christ during the Tribulation is going to be immeasurable. Only true disciples of Christ will have the guts to maintain their testimony to the point of martyrdom. Martyrdom is one of the major themes in Revelation. Being a martyr signifies the highest level of discipleship possible because it is the highest price one can pay as a Christian; the sacrifice of one's life for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

*Martyrs Plea.* Verse 10 gives the martyr's plea for God to judge and avenge their blood. It is a prayer that contrasts greatly with Stephen's prayer when he was martyred in Acts 7:60. Stephen asked that his murderers would be forgiven, these martyrs ask that their murderers would be destroyed. This prayer follows the pattern of the imprecatory Psalms of the OT (e.g. Ps 74:9-11). "The inspired psalmist could pray unselfishly as can these martyrs, but a prayer for pardon is more appropriate for a time of grace. When grace has exhausted its longsuffering, however, only judgment is left and prayers for righteous retribution are appropriate (Lenski). Such prayers come not just from a thirst for revenge. They are at least in part a protest against iniquity (Beckwith; Caird)" (Thomas, 445).

*The Manner of Petition.* The way they petition is extraordinary. It is an *outcry* and it comes with a loud voice (*phone megale*; cf. 5:2). The word *outcry* is *krazo* and means "to scream out" coupled with a loud megaphone shows the desperation and urgent need in light of the coming kingdom. This is one appeal that is made with great fervency, an appeal that is soon answered in the trumpet and bowl judgments.

### **Excursus on prayer:**

1. The prayers of these souls in heaven are involved in bringing about end-time events
2. The prayers of these souls in heaven take on a judgmental tone (imprecatory prayers)
3. Prayer is often the means by which God's plan is brought about. Without them God's plan would not be brought about.
4. When we pray in the will of God our prayers are answered
5. When we pray in the will of God we are vessels who get the joy of playing a role in bringing about God's plan

These are prayers calling for vengeance upon their murderers. Clearly, these prayers are prophecy inspired by God and a play a part in God's future plan. Should we pray such prayers of vengeance against our murderers? Two things should be observed:

1. During the age of law and grace the prayers of saints should be for the forgiveness of our persecutors not their slaughter (cf Jesus in Matt 5:44; Luke 23:34 and Stephen in Acts 7:60)
2. Our will's are not perfectly conformed to God's will
3. Our prayers are not inspired by the Holy Spirit

These martyrs lived during the Tribulation and offer their prayers from heaven. Thus, their will's have been so cleansed that they are in perfect conformity with God's will. Since God's will is to judge the earth dwellers this prayer is clearly the means by which God's future judgments will be brought about.

*The Martyr's Prayer.* The martyr's prayer begins with the words **How long?** "This perplexing question has been on the lips of the righteous almost since the beginning of the human race." How long, O Lord will you wait to judge iniquity and injustice? The grace of God in waiting so long to judge is astounding. You must wonder at the patience and longsuffering of God. But once "the Day of the Lord" begins He will release the full force of His sovereign power against iniquity and injustice removing them from the earth to establish His kingdom and His rule. So, God's answer to the martyr's question **how long?** is not long at all for the trumpet and bowl judgments are the answer. The ascription given to the **Lord** is **holy and true**. Two attributes which highlight and give reasons for God to judge and avenge their murderers. First, the Lord is **holy**, pure, set apart from sin, devoted to righteousness **and true**. This word **true** means He is dependable or faithful to His word. "He is holy in His partness from evil and true in His faithfulness to His Word. He cannot tolerate iniquity. He must avenge. The same two are applied to Christ in Rev 3:7" (Thomas, 445). The prayer is clearly not a command given to God because it comes in the form of a question. They know their blood will be avenged but they desire to know when.

The people who have slain them are not directly named but are clearly the earth dwellers mentioned in verse 10. These earth dwellers are the outright opponents of God. Lenski says, "They are ungodly people who have no home but earth and want no home but earth." There are many billions of people in this world that think of this earth as their eternal abode. They don't want to go to heaven or hell, they just want to stay here on earth. However, Christ purchased men *and the earth* at the cross as signified by the seven sealed scroll which is a title deed to the earth. Christ has the rights to the earth, not the earth dwellers. He has every right to remove them and do with earth as He pleases. After the Millennial Kingdom the earth will be destroyed and replaced by a new heavens and new earth (cf Rev 21:1).<sup>i</sup>

*God's Response.* God's response to the martyr's plea is found in verse 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.*** In other words, it's not yet time to judge them and avenge their blood. In the meantime, to hold them over until that time, God does two things: 1) He rewards them and 2) He gives them a word of encouragement. First, He give ***each of them a white robe***. The ***robe*** is ***white*** signifying "righteousness" and "holiness". The ***robe*** itself is a *stole* which is a long flowing robe reaching to the feet and is given to them as a reward for their ultimate test of commitment; death.

The ***robes*** here have engendered a debate regarding the existence of an intermediate body. The arguments for an intermediate body are as follows. *First*, a total person cannot be conceived of apart from a physical body. *Second*, a robe requires a material body. *Third*, Paul's teachings in 1 Cor 15:35ff; 2 Cor 5:1ff; and Phil 3:21 are listed as teaching an intermediate body. There are several problems with these arguments. One looming error is the fact that these martyrs existed without a body for a period of time before Christ gave them ***white robes***. If these robes represented intermediate bodies then the martyrs would have received them at death and would not have had to wait till some later time. Second, the clear teaching of Scripture is that Tribulation saints will not receive a resurrection body until Christ's Second Coming (Rev 20:4-5). Third, a final error is the fact that an angel is wearing a ***white robe*** (*stole leuke*) in Mark 16:5. Clearly then, a material body is not required for a ***white robe***. Therefore, the distribution of ***white robes*** to these martyrs does not necessitate an intermediate or resurrection body.

The second thing our Lord does is comfort them with words. ***and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer.*** They should rest from their cries of vengeance. In the meantime they can enjoy their blessed estate in heaven. The duration of their rest is ***for a little while longer***. This expression in one context refers to a time period of one year (John 7:33) and in another context a few days (John 12:35). The expression here probably lasts until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet.

**Revelation 10:5-6** <sup>5</sup> Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, <sup>6</sup> and swore by Him who lives forever and ever...that there will be delay no longer,

Thus they should rest until the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgment at which point there will no longer be delay but judgment will be swift on the earth dwellers (cf Rev 16:17; 21:6). This delay will give time for the rest of those who will be martyrs to give their lives. "The



number set in God's predetermined plan had not at this point been reached" (Lenski). This word given to the martyrs assures them that God will avenge their blood in due time. God's intervention to avenge their blood and completely destroy the earth dwellers begins when the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet is blown which releases the 7 bowl judgments. Until then, they should rest and enjoy their state in heaven.

#### **F. 6<sup>th</sup> Seal: A Great Earthquake and Cosmic Disturbances (6:12-17)**

*Revelation 6:12 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; <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. <sup>14</sup> The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. <sup>15</sup> Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the 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; <sup>16</sup> and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"*

The sixth seal corresponds to Jesus' teaching in Matt 24:7 and Luke 21:11. There Jesus mentions "great earthquakes" as well as cosmic disturbances in connection with "the beginning of birth pangs".

**Luke 21:11** and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

If "the beginning of birth pangs" refers to the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the tribulation then this seal takes place sometime near the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half. Some people try to link the 6<sup>th</sup> seal with the time just before Christ's Second Coming since both involve a blackout and since Jesus mentioned a blackout just before His coming in Matt 24:29.

**Matthew 24:29** "But 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 the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

However, this won't fly for several reasons. *First*, after the 6<sup>th</sup> seal men have the opportunity to seek hiding places in the rocks and caves but they will not have this

opportunity at the time Jesus returns. Therefore, the 6<sup>th</sup> seal will result in a global blackout of the sun and moon but this blackout will be over before the final blackout immediately after the tribulation. *Second*, the seventh seal which contains the seven trumpets has yet to be opened and it must be before Christ returns. *Third*, Rev 16:18 mentions another earthquake at the very end of the tribulation which is unparalleled in size and destruction. The great earthquake here is not said to be unparalleled. It is therefore a foretaste of the greatest earthquake to come which happens immediately after the great tribulation. Thus, the 6<sup>th</sup> seal occurs toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week.

The first thing John saw *was a great earthquake* (*seismos megas*). This will be the greatest earthquake the world has seen to date. The earthly affects of this *great earthquake* are described at the end of verse 14 where it says *every mountain and island were moved out of their places*. This literally refers to every mountain and every island. It is estimated that there are over 130,000 islands in the world and it is very common for an island to move because of an earthquake. The tsunami near India this year moved one island 100 feet. However, even with all these massive movements taking place on earth our English word *earthquake* is not totally adequate to describe this seal because the text implies that it also affects the heavens. Whatever a *seismos megas* is it is more than the earth's crust breaking apart. It is also the heavens breaking apart. It would better be translated *a great shaking* as the words can apply to the wind and the sea as well. For example, the great storm that Jesus rebuked was also called a *seismos megas* (cf Matt 8:24).

The next four parts of the seal pertain to heavenly disturbances. First, *the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair*. The darkening of the sun is a common description in OT prophecy. Whether this will be a judgment on the sun itself or on the appearance of the sun from earth is not clear. Nevertheless, the darkening will be comparable to *black sackcloth made of hair*. This material was a garment worn as a visible expression of mourning and despair (cf Isa 50:3).

Second, *the whole moon became like blood*. The reddening of the moon was another common theme of end-times judgment. The bloodlike color of the moon signifies a total eclipse so that it will be dark all day and all night. Perhaps the darkening of the sun and reddening of the moon are due to debris from the *great shaking*. This blackout will no doubt cause panic among the world's population.

Third, *the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind*. The *stars of the sky* are occasionally identified with the larger heavenly bodies like the sun but the word *asters* is not limited to this. The sun and other larger

heavenly bodies are still in place at the time of the 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet so they cannot be in view here (Rev 8:12). Thus, *stars* here refers to a meteor and comet shower unlike any the world has ever seen. It will no doubt destroy many if not all of the satellites which orbit the earth causing global communication problems. The implications of this are beyond human estimation or comprehension. These showers are so violent that they are likened to *a fig tree that casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.*

Fourth, *the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up.* The heavens are actually composed of a substance. Many people unknowingly think of our atmosphere and space as nothingness but it is composed of a lot of stuff called “matter”. The OT spoke of the heavens (the *raqiya*) as “a solid extended expanse” which is a very accurate description of space. It is a substance that can apparently be split apart. It is my contention that this is a literal splitting of the heavens at which point the earth’s inhabitants will be able to peer into the throne room of God. Notice verse 16 where the earth dwellers say to the mountains and to the rocks *“Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne,”* They have therefore been exposed to *the presence of Him who sits on the throne.* If such is the case then I suggest that God will expose them to His presence on the throne when He splits the heavens apart like a scroll. There is no doubt among the earth dwellers where this wrath is coming from. They no longer think of such events as natural disasters but as supernatural judgments.

The results on earth of the great earthquake are described as *every mountain and island were moved out of their places.* I haven’t been able to discover how many mountains there are worldwide. Geologists define a mountain as a land mass extending 1,000 feet above the base ground level. Anything less is considered a hill but I don’t know the biblical definition of a mountain. Whatever the case, you can imagine *every mountain* being *moved out of* its place is something the world has never experienced. The devastation this must cause is incomprehensible. Thousands and thousands of buildings in every major city in the world will crumble to the ground as a consequence of this earthquake. The death toll will never be known. Perhaps millions and millions of people will die due to this *great earthquake.* At almost every judgment the earth’s population is decreased substantially, sometimes more, sometimes less. The scope and intensity of this is almost unbelievable. Such a geophysical change in the earth’s surface occurs on a much larger scale in Rev 16:20.

*Upper and Lower Class in Fear.* As a result, *the kings of the earth and the chief men and the military 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.* These descriptions place

all humanity into seven classifications. First, *the kings of the earth*. These are the highest world rulers, namely kings, presidents, prime ministers, czars, etc...Second, *the chief men*. These are the high ranking officials who carry out the executive demands of the kings, presidents, prime ministers, czars, etc...Third, *the military commanders*. These are military officers who command a thousand men and lead them into battle. Fourth, *the rich* are those who control large regions of commerce. Fifth, *the strong* refers to those who have great influence over large numbers of people. This would include philosophers, educators, radio and television talk show hosts, celebrities, politicians, and authors. The first five classifications make up the upper class of society. Sixth, *every slave and free man*. The *slave and free man* make up the lower class of society. The point is that all men whether upper or lower class, whether mighty or weak are in great fear and *hide themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains*. Apparently this *great shaking* will open up many caves and places *among the rocks of the mountains* for people to hide.

*Their Cry For Death. and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;* Notice, they would rather die by being crushed than face the presence and wrath of the Lamb. This is a remarkable cry. This is a graphic picture of the terror and despair among the earth-dwellers.

“What sinners dread most is not death, but having to stand before a holy and righteous God” (Thomas, 456).

*The Source of Wrath.* The depth of their theological understanding in verse 17 is remarkable: *for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* The earth dwellers know very well that these are not natural catastrophes but supernatural judgments of a God who is more than one in person. There is even some understanding here of at least two members of the godhead; *the one sitting on the throne and the Lamb*. They know that He rules from heaven and they know of the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of the Lamb. This is a remarkable amount of known information for unbelievers. But known information does not save. One must place his trust in *the Lamb* to receive forgiveness of sins. They obviously don't want to do that. They would rather die than stand before a holy and righteous God.

The verb *has come* is an aorist indicative referring to the previous wrath in the first four seals. They have come to see clearly that these catastrophes are not natural but are judgments poured out by God. Perhaps this realization only came when they caught a glimpse into the throne room of God when the sky was ripped back like a scroll.

*The Day of the Lord Has Come.* The phrase ***the great day of their wrath*** should remind you of “the day of the Lord”. It signifies that “the day of the Lord” has already begun and it characterizes this day as a day of wrath. Thus, the judgment phase of “the day of the Lord” has already begun. This judgment phase will culminate with the Second Coming of Christ, also known as “the great and terrible day of the Lord” in Joel 2:31 and Mal 4:5. But the day of the Lord does not end there. The blessing phase of the day of the Lord begins with the Millennium and extends till its end. So, the broad day of the Lord is 1,007 years long. The first 7 years are the judgment phase, the last 1,000 years are the blessing phase. This verse signifies that the judgment phase has already begun

The final question of verse 17 ***and who is able to stand?"*** is rhetorical. It does not mean who is able to stand at the judgment in heaven but who is able to survive what might be coming upon the earth. The implication is that no one will be able to survive. Nahum the prophet said, “Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken up by Him” (Nah 1:6). This should be an incentive for Christians to live faithfully and to be looking for His soon coming and deliverance from this terrifying period.

## **Review Outline**

- I. The First Six Seals: “The Beginning of Birth Pangs” (Rev 6)
  - A. 1<sup>st</sup> Seal: Peaceful Conquest (6:1-2)
  - B. 2<sup>nd</sup> Seal: Warfare and Bloodshed (6:3-4)
  - C. 3<sup>rd</sup> Seal: Famine (6:5-6)
  - D. 4<sup>th</sup> Seal: Death to ¼ of Human Population (6:7-8)
  - E. 5<sup>th</sup> Seal: Martyrs Under the Altar (6:9-11)
  - F. 6<sup>th</sup> Seal: A Great Earthquake and Cosmic Disturbances (6:12-17)

Why so much Scripture about this future period of God’s wrath?

1. Because of the wickedness of sin
2. Because of the holiness of God
3. Because of the justice of God
4. Because of the uncompromising nature of God
5. To produce believe in unbelievers
6. To produce holiness in believers

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<sup>i</sup> Perhaps there is a continuity between the present heavens and earth and the new heavens and new earth in that the latter is composed of the former destruction as per the Frenchman's Lavoisier's discovery that matter is neither created or destroyed only converted from one form to another. This would mean that the new heavens and new earth are not an *ex nihilo* creation but a re-creation.

[Back To The Top](#)

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