

**Revelation 6: 12-17; "The Day of Christ's Wrath",**  
**Sermon # 61 in the series - "The Faithful and True Witness",**  
**Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on June 24th, 2007.**

As one reads verses 6-12 of the 6th Chapter, he is likely to conclude that somehow John is jumping forward to give us a picture of Christ's Second Coming and what the great men of that time will do when they realize that they are going to fall under His judgment. Surely when Christ comes again visibly and bodily, that will be the most awful of times to all wicked men then. And although it is surely true that this description could be true of the Last Day, that awful Day of Judgment, there are good reasons to believe that it does not refer, in the first sense, to that Day in this passage. When that Day comes, it will be the end of the World, and everything will indeed change for the better for all of God's people. But if this was referring to the end of the World there would be no place to be found to have another seal opened up by the Lamb. Something is going to change for the better, but this is only the sixth seal of the book, and so there is much more chronology to be reviewed in the history of the Church in this book before the end of the World comes. There is also the trumpets and the vials which follow the seals. The reason that these verses make us think especially of the Day when the Lord Jesus returns, is because of the wording of verse 17 which says, "For the great day of His wrath has come and who is able to stand?" "Surely," you say to me, "this is the Day of Judgment." And I will say to you, "Yes, this is a day of judgment, but it is not the Day of Judgment." As we attempt to understand many prophetic passages in the Bible, we must understand this distinction. There are prophetic descriptions which are expressly referring to judgments made by God upon a society or nation, that are referring to that nation being destroyed or altered greatly in some aspect of its rule and government over its citizens. In the case of the verses before us, it is referring to Christ's coming to judgment upon the Pagan Roman Empire; not to destroy it entirely, but to so modify its governmental stance and policy toward Christians, that the Empire itself would become generally and outwardly Christian. We should understand that "all power and authority have been given to our Lord Jesus; all authority in heaven and earth." And so there came a time; a time in the mind of our Lord Jesus, in conjunction with the decrees and purposes of God, for the Pagan Roman Empire to be judged. Her false worship and her persecuting of Christians by the Emperors, was now going to come to an end. Certainly, at this very moment, the souls of these persecuting men are even now being punished, and they will be punished endlessly for the heinous sins and crimes that they committed in their days. But their ruling in this ruthless way, this exercise of their power that decided that so many Christians should be tortured and killed; this was about to be changed in a dramatic way, which would show forth the triumphs of Christ over this opposition of Satan.

So this afternoon we want to look at Christ's wrath against this Pagan persecuting system of the Roman Empire under these heads. 1st- His wrath in the great earthquake. 2nd- His wrath in the heavens. And 3rdly- His wrath upon all unrepentant sinners in this time period of the seals. Follow me, if you will.

**1st of all - Let us look at Christ's wrath in the great earthquake.** (Verse 12a)

"I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake." Now great earthquakes are something that men rightly fear very much. God, when He brings an earthquake, is shaking the ground and splitting it open, and buildings and streets and houses can all be damaged and destroyed in a very short period of time. The earthquake that is mentioned here shook the world of Emperor worship and the Emperor persecutors to the ground. It brought it down, so that it would not be able to prevail against the advance of the Christian religion in the Empire. I need to take you to other passages of Scripture in order to be able to prove that earthquakes in prophetic language have this kind of meaning. Turn with me to Haggai chapter 2. Here we find the prophet speaking to Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, words of encouragement as to why they should go ahead to complete the work of building the temple. It would be in this temple that the Christ would be seen. Things were going to change when Jesus Christ came to this temple in His first coming. Listen to verse 6. "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord." The marginal reading may be more familiar to you. "I will shake all nations and the Desire of All Nations shall come." Listen to verses 21 and 22 also. "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: 'I will shake heaven and earth.' "I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms." "I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother." Now this is referring to days of the Lord's judgments upon the Persian kingdom which was ruling over the Jews at that time. It refers also to the destruction of the Grecian kingdom later on by the Romans. That is what this shaking of heaven and earth is referring to. It is the shaking of the world powers, the world monarchies that reigned over the people of God in that day and in the days to come. The temple which Zerubbabel built was to last through all these political revolutions, or earthquakes, and then Christ would come; the Desire of All Nations. There would be a great change when He came. When He came and died for our sins, then would come the end of the whole Jewish system of Mosaic ordinances which was the reason that that temple existed.

This is referred to in Hebrews chapter 12, if you will turn there. In verse 25 it says, "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks." "For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn

away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying 'Yet once more I shake not only the earth; but also heaven.' "Now this 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain." What Christ brought in, through His fulfillment of the law and His sacrifice on the cross, was an everlasting kingdom which he gives to us who believe in Him. An earthquake has taken place and the Old Mosaic system has come down. The purpose for which it was given by God was fulfilled in Christ's coming, and it was no longer needed. This whole old system of "the heavens and the earth" give way to "new heavens and earth", a kingdom which cannot be shaken. The Jewish kingdom was shaken and so too, the final world monarchy of Roman power is shaken when Christ came the first time. So the earthquake of our text is not only a similar kind of earthquake, it is directly related to the earthquake of Haggai 2. This earthquake will destroy the persecuting power of the Pagan Roman Empire. This would come to an end. Christ himself would shake them up and shake them down.

**Now 2ndly- Let's look at Christ's wrath against the Heavens.** (Verses 12b-14)

By the heavens we mean the terms "the sun, the moon, the stars, and the sky." And these terms, just like the earthquake, are not referring to the literal physical entities, but rather a change in regard to the political rule in the Roman Empire. It is a change in regard to the policy of its leaders and people in high places. Men who have treated Christ's servants and saints so badly are going to be removed. I think that once again it will be profitable to examine where these word symbols occur in other parts of Scripture, so that our conclusions can be justified. Turn with me first, to Genesis Chapter 37. You will recall the dream of Joseph which he told to his brothers and to his father. In verse 9 it says, "Then Joseph dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, 'Look, I have dreamed another dream.'" "And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." "so he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, 'What is this dream that you have dreamed?' "Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?" You see, they were offended because he was the younger in the family. It was presumption to think that they ought to bow down to him. He ought to be showing submission and respect to them in terms of their parental and brotherly authority, not they to him. But notice that "the sun" refers to Jacob, "the moon" to his mother, "and the stars to his brothers in a prophetic sense. They are the leaders in this family in relation to Joseph.

Now turn over with me to Joel Chapter 2 and you will find this same kind of prophetic language being used to refer to other authorities and entities. In verse 1 of this chapter a trumpet is being blown to announce a great judgment coming upon the nation of Israel. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My

holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand." A trumpet was an instrument used in that time, to gain the attention of the people, to sound an alarm that would gather them together to consider what was going to shortly take place. What is going to happen, God announces through the prophet in verse 2b, "A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations." He means that the Chaldeans and the Assyrians were coming against them. God was sending these fierce people against them as a judgment for their many sins which they had not repented of. Listen to verses 10 and 11. "The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness." "The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great." "For strong is the One who executes His word." "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?" "Now therefore, says the Lord, turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." "So rend your heart and not your garments." We should certainly take notice of the metaphors used here in these verses. When it says that the earth quakes, it does not mean the literal earth quaking in any sense but by the fact that the horse's hooves of the Chaldeans would be heard coming against the nation of Israel. When it says the sun and the moon grow dark, it does not mean it literally in any sense but that the swarms of locusts which were being sent against Israel might block their light in the day and in the night. And the locusts themselves may represent the Chaldean forces that were going to "swarm into the land". But when it says, "The sun and the moon grow dark and the stars diminish their brightness, it is really referring to the effect produced upon the minds and the hearts of the prominent leaders and people among the nation of Israel when they realize that they cannot escape this judgment. "The earth quakes before these invaders who execute God's judgment, means that the people are greatly affected. The heavens; referring to the leaders of the nation, are found trembling. The sun and the moon, referring to fathers and mothers in the nation of Israel, "grow dark." They are downcast and full of dread and gloom. And the stars, those greater and more able politicians and statesmen, are "diminished in their brightness." They cannot come up with any ideas of how this terrible judgment is to be turned away from them. This is the true meaning of the words in the spiritual sense in which they are to be understood. These events are the picture of God's judgment falling especially upon the political and spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel, but these judgments also affect all of the people, great and small.

When we apply what we have learned here to Revelation 6, and the verses that we are studying, it becomes clear what we are looking at. The great earthquake signifies a great change in the way that Christians were going to be treated in the Roman Empire. The old persecuting system put in place by the Emperors was going to be shaken to the ground. The sun and the moon, the leaders and the

generals in the military, and the prominent citizens in the governing of the Empire that had supported this policy were going to "become as black as sackcloth", and become "like blood." Their approach to the treatment of Christians would be looked upon as very wrong, the shedding of their blood, the wrong way to treat them. The wrath of Christ would come against this policy, and days of vengeance upon the leaders of the Empire. John Foxe says of Constantine, "It was the 27th of October, in the year 312, about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun was beginning to lower in the heavens." "the emperor was leading his veteran soldiers to a battle against Maxentius, which would either bring him death or establish him undisputed sovereign over the greater part of the known world." "Suddenly there appeared a radiant light in the sky, which took the form of a cross, with this inscription plainly written upon it in Greek -- By this sign conquer." Constantine went on to conquer all the other Emperors who opposed him. "Speaking of his victories over rival emperors of his own time, he said, 'I subdued these solely by faith in Christ; for which God was my helper, who gave me victory in battle, and made me triumph over my enemies.'" "He hath likewise so enlarged to me the bounds of the Roman Empire, that it extends from the Western Ocean almost to the uttermost parts of the East: for this domain I neither offered sacrifices to the ancient deities, nor made use of charm or divination; but only offered up prayers to Almighty God, and followed the cross of Christ."

Constantine brought great reforms in religion as well. The "sky receding as a scroll when it is rolled up," and "every mountain and island being moved out of its place", of our text, have reference to "the places of idolatrous worship, which were usually built upon the mountains." (Gill) These places of worship were torn down when Constantine came to the throne as a "Christian Emperor". "He enacted laws prohibiting the offering of the sacrifices, the erecting of images to the gods, and the exercising of the Heathenish rites." "He caused pastors to be settled everywhere in the churches, and advanced Christianity, which had been so much trampled upon, to be the religion of the Empire." "In his time the Gospel was farther propagated among some remote nations." (Gilles) And so we see that Rome Pagan became Rome Christian.

**And this is how I want to close this sermon; by showing you how Christ's wrath is portrayed as falling upon all the unrepentant sinners who had opposed and persecuted the Christians in this time period.**  
(Verses 15 and 16)

"And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" The "kings of the earth" are the Emperors, the rich men are the prominent citizens in that society, the commanders are those who carried out the bloody edicts. The

slaves and free men are every citizen in that society that opposed the gospel of Christ and did not repent. All came to know and to understand the wrath of Christ toward the end of this time period, coming against them and their worship of the Emperor, and their sacrificing to false gods. The wrath of Christ, coming in judgments upon the Pagan Roman Empire caused the stoutest hearts of these sinful kings and rich men and commanders to fail. They hid themselves from it in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. They said, "Fall on us and hide us" from His wrath. And these were only the earthly judgments. How much greater and more fearful will be the Day when Christ returns and the Last Judgment takes place? I plead with you this afternoon, that if you are treasuring some secret sin, harboring some ill-will for any of God's dear saints, or thinking that there is no wrath of God to deal with in your own life, that you will repent of it now, before it is too late. "For the great day of God's wrath will not only come on all the kingdoms and systems of this world that oppose the reign of Jesus Christ, it will come forever upon every man who chooses to reject Him, and not to repent. May each of us know the blessings of salvation coming to our heart. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved from all wrath, now and forevermore.