

Revelation 6:1-17

"The Deal Unsealed"

For several weeks we've been enjoying the heavenly happenings of Ch's 4 & 5. However there's a reason that we've been caught up (as it were) into the heavenlies and that's because God's plan for human history is wrapping up & winding down. So as much as we'd like to hang out in heaven God still has business to tend to on planet earth. There is an entire planet of people who've collectively rejected J.C. and opted to make their stand against the Lord.

And God cannot be *holy*, or righteous *truly* if He does not deal w/& bring judgment upon sin. So before we can all live happily ever after God's holiness, His righteousness, His justice must be satisfied.

God sent a peace treaty to planet earth in the Person of J.C. we might recognize it as the "Prince of Peace Treaty" and man (in essence) tore it up & through it back in His face. Through the rejection of God's love, man extended the invitation to God's wrath. & Now we come to the time in which God pours out that wrath of the Christ rejecting, Christ refusing world.

Now we thank God that we (as the church, God's children) have not been appointed to wrath (Rom 5:9, 1 Thess 5:9), but to obtain salvation through our Lord J.C. So as we've kept the context & followed the flow we've see the age of the church, then the snatching up of the church into heaven; we've seen the heavenly happening in Ch's 4 & 5 and now that the church is safely seated in heaven God will turn His attention back to planet earth.

In Ch 5 we have noted a scroll that's come into focus. A scroll that's sealed w/7 seals. As for what it is exactly there's plenty of ambiguity but whatever it is (we lean toward the Word/will of God that deals w/the culmination of human history & the coming of Christ Personally to the earth), whatever it is, before Christ can return there are a # of things that need to happen. If those things are to happen this scroll will need to be unsealed, but none were found worthy to open the scroll & loose it's seals.

However just a John had lost all hope, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David prevailed to open the scroll & to loose it's 7 seals. Of course that resulted in an ever increasing crescendo of worship in which the Lamb of God who was slain & has redeemed us to God by His blood out of every tribe & tongue & people & nation was praised w/greater & greater passion until all of creation exploded in a chorus of praise. But now it's time, the scroll has been apprehended & it's seals will be opened.

As the seals are opened there are corresponding events that take place on the earth. Again, all these things will lead up *to* & culminate *in* the coming of Christ. Notice.

Vs1-2

Before we get to Vs 2 allow me to comment briefly on Vs 1. John was watching & the Lamb (that is the Lord J.C.) opened 1 of the 7 seals; at which time one of the Cherubim spoke w/a voice like thunder. We saw the storm brewing in heaven back in Ch 4 so now 1 of these Cherubim thunders forth. What I want you to realize is what he says. It's translated in the NKJV (& KJV) "Come & see". Which makes us see this as an invitation to John to behold what's happening. It's not (John's already watching, He makes that very clear).

A more accurate rendering would simply be "Come!" Here's my point, the phrase isn't an invitation to John, it's an exhortation to the rider. The angel summons the rider of white horse & releases him (if you will) to do his thing upon the earth.

Now; Vs 2 becomes a crossroad of interpretation in the book of revelation. Depending upon how you see *this* Vs it tells us much about how you understand this book; be it in a historical context or a prophetic, yet future context. Those who believe this book to be primarily historical have a tendency to see this rider as *Jesus Christ*. Those who see this book as primarily prophetic have a tendency to perceive this rider as *antichrist*. & At the risk of overstating the obvious, you can't take a *greater, more polar opposite position*...

Personally I think you have to do a whole lot of stretching to see this rider as J.C. (tells you which camp I'm in doesn't it) People who believe this will often point to Ch 19 for support because there we see Jesus returning to the earth on a white horse. However outside of the white horse there's really nothing that this rider has in common w/Jesus.

#1 Jesus is the One opening the seals, #2 Jesus will return at the *end* of the Great tribulation, seal 1 marks the *beginning*, #3 this rider had a *bow*, Jesus has a *sword* which proceeds from His mouth (which as you know is the Word of God). #4 The crown that this rider has is the "stephanos" or the victors crown which was a temporary crown as to where the crown that Jesus wears is the "Diadema" also known as the "kingly crown". The A.C. could never wear the crown of the King, but he could certainly wear a victor's crown seeing that he will rule the earth for a limited time. #5 What follows in the wake of Jesus' coming will be 1,000 yrs of peace, & righteousness will cover the earth as waters cover the sea. However what follows in this rider's wake is war, famine, pestilence & death.

Plus it makes total prophetic sense. Leave Revelation & turn to **2 Thess Ch 2**. (Vs 1-12)

So antichrist can't be revealed (Vs 5) until "He" who restrains is removed.

The restraining Person is the Person/power of the Holy Spirit in the presence of the church. But once the church is removed (the Holy Spirit will still be present God is always present but He will no longer restrain evil/sin) then the son of perdition will be revealed.

Well, in the book of Rev, Ch 4 the church is caught up, Ch 5 we see the Lamb of God apprehend the scroll & the 1st significant order of service that takes place on the earth after the rapture of the church is the rising to power of the antichrist. He goes forth conquering & to conquer.

Ok, when I say, "antichrist" don't think "opposite of Christ" but rather think "instead of Christ". He won't appear w/cloven hooves and horns. He will be everything people thought Jesus should've been; he'll be "Christ-like" in the way he handles himself (at least initially). He's the one of whom Jesus prophesied when He said, *"I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive."*¹ Speaking of this false Messiah (counterfeit Christ) that will rule the earth. He's not going to rise to power via military might as a heavy handed dictator. Notice he has a bow, but there's no mention of arrows. He'll be seen in a manner the commands respect, but he will conquer peacefully, through diplomacy. Remember these words, *"For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."*²

So there will be peace initially, but it won't last. This man's true colors will begin to emerge w/increasing intensity & ferocity. What people thought would be a wonderful world leader (which is what we'll get in Christ) in reality will become a ruthless dictator.

Vs 3-4

Few things here quickly. Again we note the short-lived so called "peace on earth" that comes w/the reign of the A.C. He presents himself as a man of peace, but it won't last. Ultimately because it is written, *"...the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 'There is no peace,' Says my God, 'for the wicked.'"*³

Something else I want you to notice is the emphasis placed upon the riders that what they have has been *given* to them. We see that a particular privilege (if we can call it that) was *granted* to this rider of the red warhorse; there was *given* to him a great sword.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 [Jn 5:43]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. 1982 [1 Th 5:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

³ The New King James Version. 1982 [Is 57:20-21]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Authority is *granted* to these riders. Who do you think is allowing it? It's not Satan that's giving this authority to these riders, this is the judgment of God upon the earth. God is the one upon the throne & *He* is the One who is at this point pouring out His wrath upon those who've refused the escape route in Christ.

Now, as I said this horse & it's rider speak of war; but here's what's important for you to see. He didn't need to *bring war w/him*. All he had to do was "take" peace from the earth. Then mankind was obliged to take it from there. Here's what you need to realize. Peace (between men & nations) is God's gift to mankind. It is not the *natural* state of affairs between man. The natural state is to dominate; might makes right. But once this rider "takes peace from the earth", warfare ensues. It's as though God is saying, "You don't want My peace, you've rejected the Prince of Peace, fine, I'll take peace from the earth & you can see how you fare..." At that point men rush in w/war & destruction.

Even presently (globally) we live in an age of war & conflict with the nations of the world spending over 1.5 trillion dollars annually on military expenses. People often point to Adolf Hitler as the premier example of ruthless dictatorship (& believe me what he did was an atrocity) yet Joseph Stalin, & Mao Tse Tung were responsible for the deaths of millions & millions (each) more than Hitler. Having said that the death toll that will take place under *this* man, A.C., a.k.a. son of perdition, a.k.a. the man of sin, a.k.a. the beast will make the death toll under those men (combined) seem mild...

Vs 5-6

From warfare to famine (which is so often the way it goes). We see (it would seem) that the A.C. will seize the economic balance as well. Of course we'll discover later that no one buys or sells w/out the mark of the beast but at this point we're seeing (it would seem) perhaps government rationing of food. At the bare minimum there will be a carefully measured amount; it will be a time of scarcity. "A quart of wheat for a denarius & 3 quarts of barely for a denarius." A denarius is equal to a day's wage. A quart of wheat was about enough for a single loaf of bread. What this is telling us is that inflation will rise to around 10-12 times the "norm" and a man could labor all day and not acquire enough ingredients to even feed his family, just barely himself.

All you get for your whole days work is the ingredients to make the bread yourself, no telling how much it is to have it made, if you want it for *this* price you make it yourself, here's the wheat, or the barely...

Now our country as a general rule knows nothing of this kind of lack. The average American dog has higher protein levels most of the world. More than ½ the world will go to bed hungry tonight, malnutrition will claim 10,000 lives everyday & when you sit down to eat lunch today, by the time you're finished 400 people will die of starvation.

However those stats pale compared to what we're reading of here; but here's the twist, "Do not harm the oil & the wine", the luxury items (not crude oil, but olive oil). The idea is that the wealthy will continue on, the rich will get richer while the middle class evaporates & the poor fall into such poverty that they can't even feed their families.

Vs 7-8

I suppose it's obvious isn't it? You can't have this kind of dictatorship, this kind of war, this kind of famine, & this kind of pestilence w/out having this kind of death toll. Over the last century alone hundreds of millions have died at the hands of dictators, war, famine & disease/pestilence.

As terrible as that is it's been over the course of 100 yrs; yet what we're reading of here will take place in the course of a few short years & it makes what's happened in our last century seem like a drop in the bucket.

Let's assume 2 billion people are caught up in the rapture. Leaving approximately 5 billion people on the planet. By the time this 4th rider is called up and has ran his course over 1.2 billion people will have died. There are only about 315 million people in all of the United States... It's no wonder Jesus said, *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."*⁴

Death takes the life *physically*, Hades will take the spirit *temporarily* until the judgment & then the lake of fire will house them *eternally*... Is death the end? Not at all; this body will perish but our spirit continues on eternally from conception forward.

Vs 9-11

Seal #5 shares w/us & shows to us a heavenly response to earthly martyrdom. Some see these people as all the martyrs from Abel up to that point, others perceive them as tribulation saints (I probably lean that way). They've been slain for the word of God & for their testimony of salvation by grace through faith in J.C.

Here they are & they're under the altar crying out for vengeance. What's the idea w/them being under the altar? It seems to come from Lev Ch 4 whereby after the sacrifice of the sin offering the remaining blood was to be poured out at the base of the altar.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 24:21). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The idea here being that the losing of their lives in the name of J.C. is by no means a waste, but rather it's a sacrifice and an offering of worship unto the Lord.

Yet they have a question, "How long O Lord, holy & true, until You judge & avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

Typically we don't think of God's people as crying out for vengeance but understand that when God's people are persecuted God has promised to set it right. So there's nothing wrong w/asking God to do what He said He would do. Plus they're not saying, "God, let us at them!" They recognize vengeance is the Lord's so they make their cry to God & leave the matter w/Him. They're not asking for personal revenge; but a vindication of God's holiness & the establishing of His justice.

We see that they're robed in white & then encouraged to rest a little while longer until the # of those who would be martyred for their faith was completed. Here's the point. Their death was not an accident, it was an appointment & that others would join them. Even in the death of His people, God is in control. Our death doesn't come through accident but by appointment. Now the means may vary; but it doesn't catch God off guard, He's in control.

Vs 12-17

I suppose at this point I should say that the chronological aspect of this book, the sequential chain of events has a little ambiguity to it. Meaning some see the seal judgments hatching the trumpet judgments, which hatch the bowl judgments...Other see these things as happening in conjunction w/one another and in Hebraic fashion John gives us the record, then rewinds to give us more detail, then rewinds to give us even greater detail.

The reason I point that out is because it would seem as though this Ch begins w/the uprising of the antichrist & ends w/the return of J.C. "The sky receded as a scroll being rolled up... (both small and great try to find shelter), hide us from the wrath of the Lamb...the great day of His wrath has come!"

So understand that w/exactly how these events are coming down there's a little bit of question. What's *not* in question, what's not uncertain is the fact that these things *are coming down*. How the judgments work in tandem people question, what they don't question is the fact that judgment is coming.

But all over the bible we see cataclysmic upheaval & celestial disturbances connected w/the coming of the Messiah.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah and even Jesus Himself all describe these kind of things. For instance Isaiah says, *"All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, And the heavens shall be rolled up like a scroll; All their host shall fall down As the leaf falls from the vine, And as fruit falling from a fig tree."*⁵ Joel tells us that the sun & the moon will grow dark; the stars will diminish in their brightness...for the day of the Lord is great & terrible; who can endure it? (Ch 2)

Trust me when I tell you, you don't wanna be here. We want the aerial view. John says there was a great earthquake, the sun became black as sackcloth of hair & the moon became like blood. Now does that mean the sun turns to black hair & the moon turns to blood? No, John isn't using technically sound scientific terminology, he's describing what he sees!!! An earthquake of global proportions, meteor showers; mountains & islands being moved out of their place (most probably due to a polar axis shift perhaps as one of the meteors collide w/the earth).

But here's what we need to glean from this; it doesn't matter who you are; God's judgment is no respecter of persons. Great men, kings of the earth, the rich, the commanders, the mighty, both slave & free are fleeing for their lives. They're all brought equally low by the wrath of God.

If one will not yield to the *love* of God to be changed by the *grace* of God, then there is no escape from the *wrath* of God. Neither rank nor wealth will deliver on that day...

People will seek to run *from* Him, rather than run *to* Him in faith; people do that today. Rather than running *to* God, they run *from* God. They try to find shelter in rocks rather than hiding in the *Rock*.

The 6th seal concludes w/a valid question: "Who is able to stand?" ... I'll tell you who can stand; only the child of God will be able to stand, only the one who has placed their faith in J.C. will be standing on the day of God's judgment, the one who's justified by grace through faith in J.C. *"Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand,"*⁶

You & me, we as believers will be able to stand in the day of His wrath because Jesus stood in our place and bore the wrath that you & I deserve as He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 [Is 34:4]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁶ *The New King James Version*. 1982 [Ro 5:1-2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So once again we turn our attention upon Jesus, & we praise Him because He was slain & has redeemed us to God by His blood.

If you haven't been redeemed by His blood, you haven't surrendered your life to Christ than I urge to do so today, turn from your sin & trust in Him w/all your heart; & it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus surely Your love for us is great, far too great for us to comprehend. Behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called the children of God. You took our wrath, that we might have Your reward. You tasted death that we might know life & You have not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation... & we give You praise. May Your word penetrate our hearts; that we might be fruitful & infectious for Your glory.

Listen, Jesus bore the wrath of God, there's no reason for you to. As for you, why not receive the love of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God, turn from your sin & trust in J.C. who shed His blood, suffered & died & rose again on the 3rd day that you by faith in Him might be spared, might be saved from the wrath to come...