

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A Verse by Verse Study

by

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CHAPTER SIX

The Opening of The Seven Seals

The church age - this present dispensation - closes with the Lord's repudiation of all which publicly bears the name Christian. Please notice I said, "which bears the name Christian."

Keep in mind that as it was in the days of Noah (eight souls were saved), as it was in the days of Lot (three souls were saved), so will it be when Jesus comes. The question is asked in the Word of God, "**Will He find faith on the earth?**" Therefore, the local assembly that advertises the name Christian will be repudiated by the Lord at the end of the church age. Read Romans 11:21-22, Revelation 3:16.

The church age ends with the "spewing out" of the visible assembly and the gathering-out of all born again saints. The saints who have died will be raised, and together the raised saints and the living saints will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air (I Thessalonians 4:13-18, II Thessalonians 2:1).

The position of the Lord Jesus today is walking in the midst of the churches. He is the chief shepherd, the overseer of the Church. And in this dispensation the chief shepherd guides the sheep, leads the sheep, seals the sheep through the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. Oftentimes this age is referred to as the dispensation of the Holy Ghost.

The Rapture takes place near the end of the third chapter of Revelation. Chapter four opens with "**AFTER these things.**" These words occur twice in verse one of the fourth chapter. The verse opens with "**After this, I looked . . .**" and closes with "**. . . and I will show thee things which must be hereafter.**" The term is also used in Revelation 7:9, Revelation 15:5 and Revelation 19:1. In connection with this, read Genesis 15:1 and 22:1.

The words "**after these things**" form a connecting link between a series of events that are already past, and a series of events that are to follow. Therefore, the obvious inference is that the history of the church on earth as recorded in chapters two and three, and beheld by John in his vision, is PAST, and that a NEW series of events is about to be unfolded. Anyone with an open mind can see this clearly. The only persons who cannot see it are those who are married to religions, and they have more respect for their doctrine than they do for the Word of God.

Immediately after the Rapture (Revelation 4:1-3) we see the four and twenty elders clothed in white raiment, wearing crowns of gold. These four and twenty elders around the throne signify the redeemed in Heaven. They represent the Church, caught up out of the earth into Heaven to be with the Lord. Therefore, in chapter four of Revelation, the Rapture has already taken place, the redeemed are already in Heaven.

Later, in chapter nineteen, verses 11-14, John sees the redeemed coming out of Heaven, following the Christ who is riding on a beautiful white horse. The saints are also riding white horses. Since these facts are clearly set before us, in what part of Revelation can the Rapture be placed except between the close of chapter three and the beginning of chapter four?

Chapter three closes one series of events, chapter four opens a new series of events. Therefore, we look for the fulfillment of the words in John 14:3 and the words in I Thessalonians 4:13-18, between chapters three and four of Revelation. Unless we admit this fact, an intelligent understanding of the book of Revelation is impossible.

It is a Biblical fact that the Church is not on the earth during the judgments . . . the “**time of Jacob’s trouble**,” the Great Tribulation.

We first see the elders (who represent the redeemed) in Revelation 4:4, and the last mention of them is in Revelation 19:4. They are not mentioned between these two chapters. Heaven is their home. The elders are not mentioned in connection with the series of events here on earth. According to Scripture, comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Corinthians 2:13), the Church will not enter nor go through any part - not one day or one hour - of the Tribulation period.

Any minister who teaches that the Church will go through any of the Tribulation period is not rightly dividing the Word.

Beginning with chapter six, we will study the prophetic part of Revelation. As we enter this prophetic part of the book, keep in mind the fact that the three different series of judgments . . . the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the vials of the wrath of God . . . will take place between the gathering of the Church to the Lord, and the time when He comes with the Church. These judgments will take place during Daniel’s seventieth week of prophecy . . . a period of seven years.

The first half of this period will be mild, but the last half will be known as the Great Tribulation - a time of blood, death, torment and suffering on this earth such as has never been known, nor ever will be known again after the Tribulation.

THE FIRST SEAL

Revelation 6:1-2:

- 1. And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.**
- 2. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.**

The judgments under the seals and the judgments under the trumpets do not occur at the same time. One follows the other. The judgments under the seals cover a larger area than the judgments under the trumpets; but the trumpet judgments are much more severe. Also, note that the Lamb is connected with the judgments under the seals, but the angels are connected with the trumpet judgments and Almighty God is connected with the vials (or bowls) of God's wrath.

John wants us to know that he was an eyewitness to what he is writing about: "**And I SAW. . .**" (Revelation 6:1). "**And I saw. . .**" (Revelation 6:2). "**And I heard . . .**" (Revelation 6:1). John both heard and saw these things, he was there, he knows firsthand, he was an eyewitness.

The first four of the seven seals are characterized by living creatures and living horses; however, the last three of the seven seals do not mention either horses or creatures. The voice that summons John to witness the opening of the first seal was as the voice of thunder - so there is no doubt as to whom the voice belongs: It is none other than Jesus. John immediately responded to the call, "**Come and see,**" and he saw "**a white horse, and him that sat upon it.**" This is a mighty war horse.

There is much discussion concerning the rider of this horse, but the rider is not the Lord Jesus Christ. This rider is not the King of kings and Lord of lords riding forth in mighty conquest. Psalm 45 and Revelation 19:11 show us that this rider could not be the Lord Jesus Christ.

These Scriptures prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the rider of the white horse in Revelation 6:2 is certainly someone else besides The Christ. The Psalmist and John declare that when Jesus rides out of the sky in great conquest, He will sit on the throne, He will assume the sovereignty of the world; but when this seal is opened there are many, many years before the kingdom of the Lord Jesus is set up in power. Therefore, this rider could not be the Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus rides out of the sky it will be on a mighty, white horse - but with Him will be a host of other riders clothed in white and riding upon white horses (Revelation 19:1-11).

This rider is none other than the counterfeit Christ, known in the Bible as the man of sin, the Antichrist. This is not an antichrist - John tells us in his Epistle that even in his day there were many antichrists (plural) - but this is the man of sin, the devil in flesh.

For everything The Lord God has that is great and wonderful, the devil has a cheap counterfeit. The prefix "anti" - means "*opposite*" - and this is the Antichrist (the lie), whereas Jesus was the Truth and the Light of the world. The Antichrist will ride a white horse, and in Revelation 19 The Christ will ride a white horse. So you see, the personality in verse 2 is a counterfeit - he counterfeits everything Jesus has.

This rider of the white horse goes forth in mighty conquest and he is victorious - the white horse is a symbol of victory; but he is victorious without bloodshed or slaughter. This rider has a BOW . . . but no arrow. In the Bible, when war was fought with a bow and arrow, the arrow was specifically mentioned. Read Numbers 24:8, Psalm 45, Zechariah 9:14. But in the account of this rider on the white horse, not one word is said about the arrow, which is the deadly part of the bow and arrow. This rider has only a bow, denoting bloodless victory.

Look at the world today. What do we hear? What is the cry of Nikita Khrushchev today? He cries, "Peace! Peace! Peace!" - and he is advocating peace without bloodshed. As I write these lines in January 1963, the newspapers have just carried headlines that Khrushchev is the emblem of peace because he settled the Cuban crisis between the USSR and the USA without bloodshed. He pulled out enough missiles to almost completely destroy the principal cities of the USA. He removed his bombers and thousands of troops, to prevent bloodshed.

Nikita Khrushchev, the head of Communism, is the forerunner of the Antichrist. HE is not the Antichrist, but he is a type as was Pharaoh, and others. They were not THE man of sin, but they are types and forerunners of that man of sin.

"A crown was given to him." Notice here that this crown is presented before victory, and is therefore not a victorious crown. This crown denotes that royal dignity and imperial power is bestowed upon this distinguished rider of the white horse, who offers to the world peace without bloodshed; and during the first three-and-a-half years of the reign of the Antichrist, there will BE no bloodshed. Those years will be a time of peace and prosperity. He will make a covenant with the Jews in their own land, and all will be peace - until three-and-a-half years have gone by, and then all hell will break loose!

"He went forth conquering, and to conquer." That is, victory after victory, conquest after conquest was his without defeat. His reign was marked with victory on every hand, and of course he became the idol of the nations who had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. Naturally, he was worshipped as the one who had finally brought world peace. Any person who reads the Word of God, listens to the radio and keeps up with current events, knows that the world is looking for a super-human to lead the nations into world peace, and into the Utopia that has been so much talked about in recent times.

But Peter tells us that when they say, **"Peace and safety,"** sudden destruction **"cometh upon them."** According to the signs all around us, we surely must be very near the Rapture - the time when Jesus will take out the Bride so that He can turn loose the judgments that are sure to come upon ungodly men.

THE SECOND SEAL

Revelation 6:3-4:

3. **And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.**
4. **And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth: and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.**

In all seven seals the statement is made, **"I saw"** (or **"I beheld"**), except the second seal. Here, John says, **"I heard."** He does not say he saw it, but that does not mean that he was not an eyewitness. The second beast said to John, **"Come and see,"** and verse 4 simply states, **"There went out another horse that was red."**

Instead of the word **“behold,”** the word **“another”** is used. The use of the word **“another”** instead of **“I saw”** may seem very trivial and unimportant to the average reader; but I BELIEVE IN THE VERBAL INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE. I believe every word in the Bible is inspired. I do not believe there is one word in it to fill up space, nor do I believe there is one word out of place. Perhaps I am a fool - but I say in the words of the Apostle Paul, **“We are fools for Christ’s sake.”**

To me, the reason words: **“I saw”** and the word **“behold”** are used in connection with the first seal and omitted in connection with the second seal, is that the seals are opened one after the other, and the white horse and the red horse do not appear at the same moment. The events did not all occur at the same time. The red horse could have appeared months after the white horse. Thus we have **“I saw . . . and behold . . . another . . . a red horse.”**

For me to dogmatically set a period of time in which the rider of the white horse rode with a bow but no arrow conquering without blood, is impossible. I cannot see a number of weeks or months; but when the white horse had completed his mission, the red horse immediately rode out. The summons from the Speaker was, **“Come,”** and when John looked, there was a red horse. Why is the second horse red? The white horse denotes peaceful victory. The red horse denotes slaughter and rivers of blood (Isaiah 63:2, Revelation 12:3). Again, the rider is not named. However, the pronoun **“him”** is used, and we know the rider is a man permitted by God to ride the red horse of blood. **“TO HIM IT WAS GIVEN,”** signifying that the man was appointed by God for that specific purpose. God used Pharaoh, and He has used others in like manner, and in this hour of judgment God will use appointed men to carry out His appointed program.

Someone may be asking, **“WHY?”** Let me answer in Bible language: **“What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. FOR THE SCRIPTURES SAITH UNTO PHARAOH, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE DECLARED THROUGHOUT ALL THE EARTH. Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will, He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, WHY DOTHE HE YET FIND FAULT? For who hath resisted His will? NAY BUT, O MAN, WHO ART THOU THAT REPLIEST AGAINST God? SHALL THE THING FORMED SAY TO HIM THAT FORMED IT, WHY HAST THOU MADE ME THUS? . . . What if God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory”** (Romans 9:14-23).

Moses declared, **“The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but the things which are revealed belong unto us and unto our children forever . . .”** (Deuteronomy 29:29). Therefore, I say in love, if we mind our own business and if we watch our own ways, we have our hands full. So suppose we let God take care of His part, and suppose we take care of our part, and there will be no conflict between us and God’s Word.

“In the beginning God. . .” (Genesis 1:1).

And since God was and is the beginning and the ending, then far be it from me to question God. There are many things I do not understand about prophecy. God’s ways are not our ways, and I confess I do not fully understand many things in the Bible. But there is one thing I DO understand: God so loved the whole wide world that He gave Jesus to die for sinners. And according to the precious Bible, Jesus died for sinners, and the invitation is to **“whosoever will.”**

Salvation is a gift - by grace through faith, the gift of God, **“not of works, lest any man should boast.”**

I can understand that God loved me, gave Jesus to die for me. Salvation is mine for the receiving. So I will follow what I can understand, and those things that are too deep for me I will wait until I sit at the feet of Jesus and hear Him explain them in words I can easily understand!

Notice - in verse 4: **“There went out another horse that was red: AND POWER WAS GIVEN TO HIM THAT SAT THEREON TO TAKE PEACE FROM THE EARTH, AND THAT THEY SHOULD KILL ONE ANOTHER: AND THERE WAS GIVEN UNTO HIM A GREAT SWORD.”**

Let me point out here that the power possessed by the red horseman was given to him - he did not have power within himself, nor did he merit the power he demonstrated. The power was given to him by another.

Jesus said, **“ALL POWER is given unto me in heaven and in earth”** (Matthew 28:18). Therefore the devil, nor anyone of his cohorts could have any power except it were permitted by God. When Jesus was on trial, Pilate asked Him a question, and then reminded Him that he (Pilate) had the power to either crucify or release Him. Jesus answered, **“Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above!”** (John 19:11).

There will be a period of peace and progress here on earth immediately following the Rapture; and it will last approximately three-and-a-half years. It will be a time when there will be little, if any, bloodshed, from the standpoint of war. But the mighty conqueror who will ride the red horse will be a bloody conqueror. He will not go forth with a bow minus the arrow. Power will be granted to him - and also **“a great sword.”** His conflict against mankind will be unchecked, and blood will run like rivers! This rider of the red horse is commanded to take peace from the earth, and he has the power to cause **“that they should kill one another.”** He will have the ability to stir up angry passions in men; they will crave blood - and blood will be shed.

We are living in a day of hatred, a day of madmen - dictators who do not value human life even as much as most of us value the life of an animal. Jesus asked, **“What is man?”** If we should ask that question of some of the modern dictators, if they answered with the truth of their hearts, they would say, “Man is a living creature, to be destroyed or annihilated if he gets in my way!” Only the Lord Jesus values man with a true sense of value of the personality created in the image of Almighty God. Jesus said, **“What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26).

After the Rapture, the devil will be loose on this earth, and truly nation will rise against nation. The wild passions of wild men will be let loose. There will be a time of wholesale slaughter.

War is surely, at all times, deplorable, and certainly thinking men do not desire war. But this is a different type of slaughter. It will be a state of open, armed, civil rebellion - man against man, fellow against his fellowman, brother against brother, sister against sister, pouring out their vengeance upon each other and spilling each other's blood as water runs from a faucet. Certainly this is the worst state of war, and it is hard for us to conceive of such a conflict. Yet, that is exactly what will happen when the rider of the red horse rides through the earth during the Great Tribulation period.

THE THIRD SEAL

Revelation 6:5-6:

5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and 10 a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The white horse, we learned, is the symbol of power and victory without bloodshed . . . the rider carried only a bow - no arrow. The red horse denotes power in wholesale bloodshed such as this world has never known.

The rider has a command to take peace from the earth, and this rider carries a great sword. The black horse is a symbol of lamentation and mourning. Here, as in the book of Zechariah, the black horse follows the red (Zechariah 6:2). The weeping prophet laments, "Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine" (Lamentations 5:10). Also read Jeremiah 4:28 and Jude 13.

The rider of the black horse holds a balance in his hand. Wheat and barley - the two grains which constitute the staff of life - are to be rationed . . . doled out by careful weight and sold for fabulous prices. Barley produces black bread, and in Bible days was eaten only by slaves and the very poor. It was much cheaper than white bread, and slaves and poor people could buy more of it for their meager earnings.

The English word "penny" mentioned here, in that day was one day's wages for a soldier or for a laboring man. Read Matthew 20:2.

One Bible commentator tells us that in the day of John, eight measures of wheat could be purchased for a penny. So you see, here the price of wheat will be eight times the normal price. For the sake of comparison, let us compare a candy bar. If you now pay ten cents for a chocolate bar, when this rider rides out, the same chocolate bar would sell for eighty cents . . . prices will jump to eight times their normal rate. Certainly there will be much hunger, suffering and death during the time of the riding of the black horse.

The statement “**See thou hurt not the oil and the wine,**” signifies that the rich will be excluded from this famine. Oil and wine were regarded as luxuries, and were to be found only on the tables of the rich. (Read carefully Proverbs 21:17, Jeremiah 31:12, Psalm 104:15.) The chastisement under the seal that produces the black horse falls on the working classes, the poor people.

The rich, governing classes will be exempt from this suffering; but they shall not escape. Under the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17) judgment is meted out to all alike - from the king down to the slave. So the rich will not escape, even though they do escape hunger when the black horse rides out.

THE FOURTH SEAL

Revelation 6:7-8:

7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

8. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Here another power is summoned. The judgments are increasing in severity. In the three preceding seals, the riders are not named. Here, the name of the horseman is Death. Hell follows alongside. The Greek word here does not mean that Hell comes along behind - but that Hell follows along with the rider of the pale horse. These two - Death and Hell - are the custodians of the bodies and souls of the men butchered during these terrible days. At the close of the thousand-year reign of Christ, they will give up their prisoners and they themselves will be cast into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 20:14).

Again we are reminded of the fact that these judgments in sequence, in character, in duration and in severity have their source in the throne of the eternal God. Authority was given to him (Death).” The authority to kill and to destroy was not his, but was given to him.

Death, by which they are carried off, is most prominently represented, and Hell followed along with Death to receive those cut off by Death, acting as Death’s hearse, on which account no separate horse is assigned to him. Death deals with the living; Hell with the souls of the dead.

Under the three previous seals, we note one instrument of judgment under each seal; but here there are four instruments of judgment.

It is very interesting to note that the four judgments named here are the same four with which the Lord threatened guilty Jerusalem of old:

“For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?” (Ezekiel 14:21).

The word “Death” in Revelation 6:8 means “*pestilence*.” The sword named under the second seal, and hunger named under the third seal, are here reproduced, coupled with two others - pestilence and the beasts of the earth.

The Bloody sword in the hand of the rider of the second horse will not be withdrawn until the divinely appointed task is finished. Hunger will not be withdrawn until its deadly work and painful death has come to completion. Many times hunger brings a much more painful death than the sword. Pestilence will reap its harvest - and last, but by no -means least, the beasts of the earth will rush in upon the poor victims, to finish the ghastly destruction of the enemies of Jesus Christ!

When the Rapture of the Church takes place, it stands to reason that percentage wise, more farmers and working people will be taken than will be those of the rich class.

When the farmers who produce food are taken there will be a scarcity of food, and when the red horse rides out with the sword, no doubt the farmers will be using a sword instead of a plowshare. They will be so busy protecting their lives, they will not have time to till the ground.

We refer, of course, to farmers who will be left when the Rapture takes place. All born again farmers will go in the Rapture. Those who are not born again will be left behind. There will be few to till the ground - and the few who are left under the second, third, and fourth seals will be so busy protecting their lives that they will have no time to grow crops and produce food. There will therefore be a time of terrible famine and starvation.

A little later in Revelation we will study the mark of the beast. No man will be allowed to buy or sell without that mark, and those who receive the mark will have committed the unpardonable sin . . . they cannot be forgiven. To receive the mark of the beast is to be damned. This will take place after the Rapture of the Church. The unpardonable sin now is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31,32); but when the Holy Ghost is gone with the Church, the unpardonable sin will be to receive the mark of the beast.

THE FIFTH SEAL

Revelation 6:9-11:

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

11. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it Was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Let me point out here that when the fifth seal is removed, the scene changes completely. Each of the first four seals is characterized by a living creature and a horse, neither of which appears under the last three seals. Thus the first four seals are set apart from the last three.

Matthew 5:13 tells us that born again believers are the **“salt of the earth.”** Matthew 5:14 tells us they are also the **“light of the world.”** The presence of the Church in the world preserves the earth, wards off corruption and holds back the terrible judgment of Almighty God.

Regardless of how unworthy and faulty we may be as believers, we are the salt that keeps civilization from rotting on its feet. But when God’s patience runs out and He removes the salt and the light, corruption and moral darkness will then engulf this earth (Isaiah 60:2).

When the Rapture takes place, the salt and the light will be taken out. The Holy Ghost will also go out with the Church, because the Church is the home of the Spirit on earth (I Corinthians 3:16).

When the Rapture takes place the Church will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air and will be presented by Christ to Himself in glory (Ephesians 5:27). **“Only He who now letteth will let until He be taken out of the way”** (II Thessalonians 2:7). The Spirit will go out with the Church, and will then work from Heaven to earth as He did in the Old Testament era. In those days the Holy Ghost came upon men, and then left them; but since Pentecost He has been in the world to stay. He has not departed for one moment.

After the Rapture of the Church, there will be persons converted by no known human agency. The first witnesses on earth after the Rapture will go through the Roman world preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 24:14). The result of their preaching is made known in Matthew 25:31-48. These first preachers of the Gospel of the Kingdom will be chiefly converted Jews. **“These my brethren”** in Matthew 25:40 refers to the Jewish brethren of our Lord according to the flesh.

The first believers after the Rapture will be severely persecuted. They will be butchered . . . **“slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held.”** The Word of God, faithfully declared, brings persecution from the world and the devil.

When these first preachers deliver their message, there will be very few on earth who will listen, because those who have been exposed to the Truth as we hear the Truth today, will be sent strong delusions. They will believe the Lie - (the Antichrist) - and they will all be damned because **“they believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”** Read carefully II Thessalonians 2:1-12 . . . study those verses very carefully . . . and you will see that when the Rapture takes place and the Holy Spirit leaves the world, those who hear the Gospel of the grace of God and refuse to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, will not listen to any message. They will be sent “strong delusion,” they will believe the message of the Antichrist - and they will all be damned!

The persons saved after the Rapture will be the multitudes who have never heard a message of the Gospel of the grace of God. Naturally there will be bitter, severe persecution, and many will be martyred because of their testimony. This earth will be literally hell on earth after the Rapture. Now the Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit, bridles the passions of ungodly men; but when the presence of the power of the Holy Ghost is withdrawn, the devil will have full sway in the hearts and lives of the masses left when the true Church is taken out.

“The testimony which they held” is not the testimony that you and I give today in this Age of Grace.

WE testify to the saving grace of God and to the gift of God - the Lord Jesus Christ. These people will testify to the coming Kingdom. They will preach that Jesus is coming to set up a literal kingdom on earth, and that testimony will cause unheard - of persecution. When Antichrist and his followers hear these fanatical preachers declare that One is coming to set up a kingdom, they will be furious - and persecution will be meted out as never before on the face of this earth.

Their testimony concerning the coming kingdom, concerning the Christ who will sit on the throne, and Concerning the kingdom rights of Christ and His followers (Matthew 24:14) will be trampled under foot, and the witnesses who declare this message will be cruelly, brutally slain.

Please notice the sacrificial word slain is used here instead of killed, which appears in verse 11. The first group referred to is composed of Jews, the latter group of “their fellow servants and their brethren,” both Jews and Gentiles. The word “slain” is used in keeping with the special character of these witnesses, probably all Jews. The second company referred to will be killed under the beast (Revelation 13:7 and 11).

The altar referred to here is no doubt the altar of burnt offering which stood in the court of the tabernacle and the temple. This altar was made of brass, typifying the endurance of divine judgment. You will also notice the altar in chapter 11:1, chapter 14:18, chapter 16:7. The golden altar of intercession comes into view - twice in these scenes - chapter 8, the latter part of verse 3, and chapter 9:13. The first altar mentioned in verse 3 and the altar in verse 5 of chapter 8 refers to the brazen altar. Brass symbolizes the judgment of Almighty God.

John saw the souls under the altar . . . the altar upon which they had been sacrificed by their persecutors.

John heard the cry from the souls of these martyrs, crying aloud for vengeance on their enemies. Do you notice anything unusual here?

These martyrs who had sealed their testimony with their life’s blood, did not pray as Jesus prayed, **“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”** (Luke 23:34). They did not pray as Stephen prayed, **“Lord, lay not this sin to their charge”** (Acts 7:60).

The change of dispensation changes the character of the Lord’s dealings with ungodly men. Law was the principle on which God dealt with wicked men in the Old Testament era. Grace is the principle on which God deals in this present dispensation. Grace goes the second mile. If one takes your coat, give him your overcoat. These martyrs are crying out in another dispensation. Grace is past. They are crying in keeping with Psalm 94: **“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. Lord, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?”** (Psalm 94:1-3).

The judgment of sin on the cross, when Jesus laid down His life willingly, is the foundation on which securely rests our glory in Heaven, our peace with God the Father.

The judgment of sin on the ungodly and the wicked that will be on earth after the Rapture, is imperative. It must be, in order to clear the earth from evil and to make it a fit dwelling place for God's earthly people. "**The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.**" It was created for the meek, and the meek shall inherit the earth in due time. No one can deny the presence of a new Heaven, a new earth, and the Pearly white City. No one can deny the Bride, the New Testament Church, Israel the nation, and the saved nations, Gentiles, that will be on earth after the consummation of all things.

John did not see these martyrs in life. He did not witness the brutality of their persecution and martyrdom.

It is all over when he sees them "**underneath the altar.**" He hears them cry with a loud voice, "**How long?**" This cry is well known among the suffering Jews, and will be better known during the coming hour of unparalleled sorrow and persecution upon the Jews. Read carefully Psalm 74:9,10; Psalm 79:5; Psalm 89:46; Psalm 94:3,4.

The appeal of these martyrs is to God. They are crying to the sovereign ruler of all creation - the One who has the right and the power to avenge the Blood shed by the enemies of the Lord God. These martyrs are crying out to God to pour out vengeance "**upon them that dwell upon the earth.**" God does not answer by pouring out vengeance at that moment. Their cry for vengeance is heard, but the answer is delayed.

Christians pray for those who despitely use them. They do not pray for God to destroy their enemies. Today, we are to return good for evil. This is the age of Grace. God declares, "**MY grace is sufficient for thee.**" And He promises no temptation beyond that which we can bear. But those who had been martyred as these Jews had been, under Law, had a perfect right to cry out that vengeance be poured out upon their enemies.

When the Lord gives to each of these martyrs a white robe, He stamps His approval upon their request. He did not rebuke them when they begged that vengeance be poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth. He did not shame them. He gave to each of them a white robe. In this day of Grace, if we return evil for evil, if we do good only to those who do good to us, we do not receive a reward, but rather a rebuke. But here, Grace is over.

This is another dispensation. These martyrs are instructed to "rest yet for a little season," until another company of "**fellow servants and brethren**" should be killed as they were killed. And when this second company has been martyred, then vengeance from Almighty God will be poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth.

We must bear in mind that neither the Old Testament martyrs, from Abel, nor the Christian martyrs, from Stephen, are referred to here. But these two companies of martyrs are killed after the Rapture - they seal their testimony with their blood after the saints have been caught out of this earth into Heaven.

THE SIXTH SEAL

Revelation 6:12-17:

12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.
15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

There are those who symbolize these verses, but to me they are just as real as are the souls under the altar in verses 9-11.

When the sixth seal is removed, there is a great earthquake. I believe exactly what verse 12 says. I know what an earthquake is; I know what the sun is; I know what black is - **“the sun became as black as sackcloth of hair.”** Sackcloth was a coarse black cloth made of hair - and as black as soot. When the sixth seal is removed the earth will go into convulsions . . . it will reel and rock. The sun will turn black, the moon will become as blood. Stars will fall from their sockets down to the earth. If God did not mean earth, then why did He not make it clear so we could understand it? The stars are in the Heaven above the earth, they will fall to the earth **“as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs”** (faulty, dried up figs), when a mighty wind shakes the tree.

I was reared on the farm, and I know what that verse means. I have seen faulty apples, pears, peaches and pecans fall to the ground when a mighty wind blew. Many times when I was a lad I would go out under the apple tree after a fierce wind and there would be many faulty apples on the ground. The good sound apples would stay in place, the faulty ones would fall. I believe verse 13 says what it means and means what it says, regardless of the doctors who would spiritualize it. I believe Heaven will split wide open and roll back like a scroll. I believe the mountains and islands will literally turn loose and move around like checkers on a checkerboard!

I believe mountains will rush to the sea like ships driven by atomic power; I believe they will roll across the terrain like mighty tanks built by man. And when the stars begin to fall, when the moon becomes as blood, when the sun is as black as soot, when islands are dashing through the ocean and mountains are rolling around like apples and balls on the floor, then there will be a prayer meeting well attended!

Kings will be there, great men will be there, millionaires will be there, chief captains will be there. Mighty men will be there - and, of course, bondmen, free men, slaves . . . , ALL men will be there.

They will hide themselves in dens and rocks, in crevices and mountains, and will beg the mountains and the rocks to fall on them. They want to be hidden from . . . hidden from what? From the Antichrist? The beast? The devil? No! **“FROM THE FACE OF HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE! AND FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB!”**

These people see the face of Jesus, and it is an hour of mortal fear. Remember Revelation 1:7: **“Behold He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.”** Suppose, dear friend, YOU are not saved. Think it over. Are you born again? Are you washed in the Blood?

I did not ask you if you belong to some church or if you embrace some religion. Only the born again will go in the Rapture, and if you are not born again you will be left behind; and if the Rapture should take place right now (and it could), if the Rapture should occur as you read these lines, and you are not saved, you would be left to go through the reign of the Antichrist, and you could very well be alive when this terrible time comes upon the earth.

These kings and great men, rulers and captains, bondmen and free men, millionaires and paupers, white men and black men, red men and yellow men - ALL men - will beg God to cover them and hide them from the face of Jesus - the Lamb of God. Why? “The great day of His wrath is come - and who shall be able to stand?”

- That does not sound like the lovely, grandfatherly God who sits in an armchair away over yonder in Heaven some place and winks at the wickedness of men, and chuckles at their ungodliness!

- That does not sound like the great, grandfatherly God who will give all men a second chance, does it? Face it!

- That does not sound like the God the liberals and the modernists talk about.

But this is the God the BIBLE talks about. Oh, yes - I believe God is love (I John 4:8) and I preach the love of God; but I do not preach a one-sided Gospel. I believe we should preach it all. I preach the love of God, the tenderness of God, the longsuffering of God; but I also preach occasionally from this text:

“See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I KILL, and I make alive; I WOUND, and I heal: NEITHER IS THERE ANY THAT CAN DELIVER OUT OF MY HAND! For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.

I WILL MAKE MINE ARROWS DRUNK WITH BLOOD AND MY SWORD SHALL DEVOUR FLESH; and that with the Blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people: for He will avenge the Blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people” (Deuteronomy 32:39-43).

Yes, I preach that God is love, God is merciful and kind; but I also preach from Paul’s text:

“FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE” (Hebrews 12:29). And I always preach, **“He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, VENGEANCE BELONGETH UNTO ME, I WILL RECOMPENSE, SAITH THE LORD. And again, THE LORD SHALL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE. IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF THE LIVING God!”** (Hebrews 10:28-31).

Someone may suggest that such a catastrophe is not feasible. God would not send such judgment upon this earth.

Have you forgotten the great darkness that for three days covered Egypt in the days before the exodus of God’s people (Exodus 10:21-23)? Have you forgotten the total darkness, the darkness of death itself, that settled over Jerusalem and the entire universe when Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:45)?

The prophet Zechariah speaks of the day that shall not be clear or dark, and Zechariah associates this day with an earthquake at the time when the Lord returns to this earth in judgment (Zechariah 14:1-7).

In the prophecy of Joel we read, **“And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come”** (Joel 2:30, 31).

Isaiah tells us, **“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine”** (Isaiah 13:9,10). **“And all the host of heaven (the stars, the moon, the sun) shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree”** (Isaiah 34:4).

We see here the picture of earth’s pains of travail as mother earth labors just before bringing forth the new creation. Jesus refers to this time: **“In those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken”** (Matthew 24:29).

Before closing chapter six, let me point out that the hand of Almighty God will shake this earth into a giant convulsion. When the day of the judgment of Almighty God becomes a reality, the peoples of earth in their fear and terror will hide in the dens and rocks, and cry for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Jesus, from the Lamb. Note: Instead of repenting and crying for mercy and salvation, they pray for the mountains and rocks to bury them and hide them from the face of the Lamb of God, sitting on the throne. My dear reader, are you ready for that judgment day?

If you are not, in the words of Amos, **“Prepare to meet thy God!”** The way to prepare is to simply trust Him by faith. **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but IS passed from death unto life”** (John 5:24).

Believe it, receive it, and live!

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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