

33. The Book of Revelation—6:9-17

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(3-3-21)

So far in our study in the Book of Revelation we have moved into chapter 6 which, running into chapter 19, records the Tribulation Period judgments coming upon planet earth.

Remember, ever since the days of Noah and the Flood there hasn't been a worldwide judgment from God.

This judgment is broken down into a series of 3 successive groups of judgments—

- the Seal;
- the Trumpet; and
- the Bowl Judgments.

In Chapter 6:1 Jesus begins to break the seals on the scroll and when He does— various judgments are unleashed upon the inhabitants of the earth.

The first four seals cover the period Jesus described in Matthew 24:8 as— *“the beginning of birth pangs”*.

As terrible as those four judgments are, they are only the beginning of sorrows (birth pangs) for the people of earth—the beginning of God's wrath.

The final 3 seal judgments will be much, much worse!

Just as a woman's birth pains increase in frequency and intensity the closer the birth of a child gets—so too will the judgments depicted by the seals intensify throughout the Tribulation Period until they culminate in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to planet earth and the birth of the Messianic Kingdom!

That's why I'm so thankful and excited about the promises God made to His Church—

Revelation 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV)

¹ After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard *was* like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."

Revelation 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

Remember that in 2 Peter 2:9 God promised that He would not punish the righteous with the wicked—

2 Peter 2:9 (NKJV)

⁹ ...the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations [tribulation] and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment...

1 Thessalonians 5:9 (NKJV)

⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ...

So very simply—the Rapture is Jesus *evacuating* His Church (Bride) off of the earth before pouring His judgment (wrath) out.

After the Rapture of the Church in Revelation 4:1—starting in chapter 6, Jesus steps up to the Father’s throne and takes the scroll out of His hand—and when He begins to break the 7 seals on the scroll—God’s wrath is poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth.

This judgment will cleanse the earth of the “earth-dwellers” (defiant rebels against God) in preparation for Jesus taking possession of what He has bought and paid for on Calvary’s Cross and the establishing of His Kingdom.

Revelation 6:1-8 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals [‘number 1’ or the first seal]; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. ³ When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁴ Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that *people* should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. ⁵ When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." ⁷ When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." ⁸ So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

The Fifth Seal

Revelation 6:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been 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, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" ¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were*, was completed.

There are many who have asked, “*Who are these people?*”

These are “*Tribulation Saints*”—people who were brought to Christ during the Tribulation Period but then martyred for their faith during the period of the first 5 seals (the fifth seal covers the end of the first 3 ½ years of the Tribulation into the second half when the persecution by the Antichrist against the people of God really shifts into high gear).

This corresponds to Matthew 24:9—*“Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake.”*

The question is—how were these people brought to Christ during the first half of the Tribulation Period if all the Christians were taken to heaven in the Rapture *before* the Trib. Period started—who witnessed to them?

Notice that in verse 9 they are called **“souls”** and yet they are fully conscious—which means the doctrine of *“soul sleep”* is incorrect.

When a believer in Christ dies their body ‘sleeps’ in the grave but their soul goes into the presence of the Lord in heaven. (The souls of unbelievers go into Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment.)

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV)

⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

This of course speaks of the resurrection of ‘Church Saints’ or those who come to saving faith in Christ during the Church Age (Pentecost to the Rapture).

➤ ***“What happens to Christians who die during the Tribulation Period?”***

Well, their physical bodies are buried and go back to the dust of the earth—but like *any* Christian who dies—their souls go immediately into the presence of the Lord in heaven (as we see here in Revelation 6)—

2 Corinthians 5:8 (NKJV)

⁸ We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body [in physical death] and to be present with the Lord.

But notice that these redeemed people in heaven (Revelation 6:9-11)—don’t yet have their glorified resurrection bodies. So, you may ask—

➤ ***“When are the Tribulation Saints resurrected?”***

Those believers that were martyred for their faith during the Tribulation Period will be raised up when Jesus returns to the earth at His Second Coming to reign with Him during the Millennial Kingdom—

Revelation 20:4 (NKJV)

⁴ And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

**“How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”
(verse 10)**

Commentators have pointed out that *these* believers who are martyred for their faith in Jesus are not praying (as He taught His disciples living in the Church Age)—

“Father forgive them for they know not what they do” or “Father, don’t lay this sin [the sin of killing us] to their account.”

Instead, they’re saying, *“Lord, how long till You get them! How long until You wipe them out! How long before You judge them!!”*

That is because the age of grace (the “Church Age”) has come to an end—it ended with the Rapture. Now we are in—the “Day of God’s Wrath”—i.e., the Tribulation Period.

In other words, this indicates that these are different believers than those who live at the present time (the Church Age)—these are not Church Saints—they are Tribulation Saints (both are different from Old Testament Saints. (Explain)

The term ‘earth-dwellers’ appears 10 times in Revelation and always refers to unbelievers.

The Sixth Seal

Revelation 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.

This could coincide with what God said thru the prophet Amos—

Amos 8:9 (NKJV)

⁹ "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord God, "That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;

Verse 12 lists the first of 3 mighty earthquakes that the book of Revelation records—the others are mentioned in:

Revelation 11:13 (NKJV)

In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Revelation 16:18, 20 (NKJV)

¹⁸ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth... ²⁰ Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

This final earthquake will be so powerful that it splits the earth wide open—

Isaiah 24:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ The earth is violently broken, The earth is split open, The earth is shaken exceedingly. ²⁰ The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, And shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, And it will fall, and not rise again.

Revelation 6:13 (NKJV)

¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

This is not referring to literal stars—the Greek is ‘astare’ which means ‘*a shining heavenly body.*’

I believe these are meteorites falling from space and burning upon entering earth’s atmosphere. It could be that at this point, the earth passes through the tail of a great comet (if it was big enough and came close enough to the earth it’s gravitational force could trigger massive earthquakes).

Or John might have seen a group of asteroids (which are much bigger than meteorites) striking the earth that looked like stars as they entered our atmosphere and began to burn up.

Is that what John sees in Revelation 8:8—a giant asteroid?—

Revelation 8:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then the second angel sounded: And *something* like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood.

This is the best description a first century man like John could use to describe what he’s seeing—“*stars falling from heaven to the earth.*”

If John is seeing asteroids and they were big enough—they could affect the rotation or even the tilt of the earth—

Revelation 8:12 (NKJV)

¹² Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.

Does this mean that the brightness of the sun, moon and stars is reduced by one-third?

Many commentators believe that is what is being said here—but that it will only be temporary (Revelation 16:8-9)

Others, like myself, believe that these cataclysmic judgments change the earth’s rotation or tilt in some way so that a typical 24-hour day will be changed into a 16-hour day—

Matthew 24:22 (NKJV)

²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

In saying this, Jesus wasn’t referring to the *number of days* that will take place during the Great Tribulation Period (last 3 ½ years)—that number is fixed at 1260 days (Revelation 12:6).

Rather, I believe Jesus could be talking about the *length* of each individual day and how the days will be shortened from 24 to 16 hours.

Revelation 6:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

When Mount St. Helens exploded on May 18, 1980—the power of the explosion was equivalent to a 50-megaton warhead.

A one megaton explosion is 50 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. One of our Calvary pastors lived in the area and he said that for days the sun was blackened out by falling ash and the moon at night looked blood red.

This sounds like a natural phenomenon which God uses to judge man—natural phenomenon can be very powerful and do a lot of damage—

- In August of 1883 when Krakatau, the volcanic island in the Pacific exploded—the explosion was so powerful it was heard 3000 miles away.
- It changed tides 7000 miles away in both directions which is more than halfway around the earth.
- It sent tidal waves for 1500 miles and changed the weather of the earth for 2 years—and that’s just one volcanic eruption!

The book of Revelation is telling us that what took place when Mount Saint Helen exploded will look like a firecracker compared to what is coming!

Revelation 6:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!

Notice, where the redeemed are at this point—they are in heaven praising the Lord, the Creator of all things! In contrast, the earth-dwellers are on the earth praying to the earth (their god) to crush and kill them.

A few days ago, actor Mark Ruffalo received a Golden Globe Award. In his acceptance speech he urged everyone watching to *"take care of Mother Earth."*

He said, *"We have a dying mother... She is Mother Earth. And we must come to balance with her and honor her and she will heal... The good news is inclusion and justice and care for Mother Earth is breaking out everywhere."*

What many like Ruffalo are doing is *worshipping* the earth—they call her ‘Gia’ (or ‘Gaea’), the earth goddess. In Romans 1 Paul said that the wrath of God is going to be poured out on the people of earth because they refused to give God glory and chose rather to worship and serve the creation instead of the Creator.”

Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This verse is one of the *‘proof’* texts that those who hold to a “Pre-Wrath Rapture” eschatology point to as ‘proof’ that the wrath of God doesn’t start until sometime after the second half of the Tribulation Period begins.

They maintain that the wrath of God (the Tribulation Period) doesn’t begin with the breaking of the first seal.

It is important that they make this claim because they believe the Rapture of the Church will happen just before the wrath of God is poured out on the earth.

This they believe will occur sometime after the mid-point of the Tribulation Period—based on Revelation 6:16-17 and the opening of the Sixth Seal.

Those of us who hold to a “Pre-Tribulation Rapture” eschatology also believe the Rapture will take place before God’s wrath (judgment) begins.

It’s just that we believe the wrath of God starts with the breaking of the First Seal and the coming of the Antichrist onto the world scene.

As I have said—those who hold to a Pre-Trib. Rapture believe that the Antichrist will be the first judgment of God upon this Christ rejecting world—which official starts His wrath during the Tribulation Period.

And since the Church has not been appointed to wrath—we have to be raptured before the Antichrist rises to power. But here’s the problem with the Pre-Wrath interpretation of this Scripture—in the Greek verse 17 doesn’t say—“**the great day of His wrath has come**” as in— “*It’s about to start*”.

It says, “**For the great day of His wrath has already come...**”—or in other words, “*It has already begun*” (I believe with the breaking of the first seal)!

Let me explain to you what I believe is going on.

It’s not that God’s wrath is *about* to start—it has been going on for roughly 4 years at this point (we are past the mid-point of the Trib. Period).

It’s just that the people of the earth (the earth-dwellers) have refused to believe it’s God’s judgment (if they believe in God at all at this point). Rather, they have been ‘*chalking it up*’ to natural disasters (probably caused by ‘global warming’!) and not as supernatural punishments from God upon their wicked, sinful lives!

Remember, that the Two Witnesses have been preaching to them (since the very beginning of the Tribulation Period) that the cataclysmic upheavals the world has been experiencing is God’s wrath—but the Antichrist and his followers have been explaining these judgments away.

But now, as the world enters the second half of the Tribulation Period and the judgments of God start really ramping up—they can no longer explain away what is happening as ‘natural phenomenon.’

You ask, “*Does that mean they start repenting?*”—think again!

(We’ll see how their rebellion escalates and not deescalates as we progress in our study of Revelation)