

34. The Book of Revelation—6:17

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(3-10-21)

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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 this fallen world.

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.

Last week we got as far as the sixth seal—

Revelation 6:12-17 (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. 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. ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 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! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

This verse is one of the 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.

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. Which means, they believe the Rapture 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.

Those of us who hold to a Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture believe that the Antichrist will be the first judgment of God upon this Christ rejecting world—which officially 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.*"

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 Tribulation 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 and not as supernatural punishments from God upon their wicked, sinful lives!

The prophet Isaiah confirms this interpretation—

Isaiah 34:1-4, 8 (NKJV)

¹ Come near, you nations, to hear; And heed, you people! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world and all things that come forth from it. ² For the indignation of the LORD *is* against all nations, And *His* fury against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to the slaughter. ³ Also their slain shall be thrown out; Their stench shall rise from their corpses, And the mountains shall be melted with their blood. ⁴ 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...⁸ For ***it is the day of the LORD'S vengeance*** [wrath]...

Not that the Day of the Lord judgments are about to start—those things that Isaiah describes are part of the Day of the Lord judgments!

Scholars point out that the sixth seal is based on the prophecy in Isaiah 2:10-21:

Isaiah 2:10-21 (NKJV)

¹⁰ Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty. ¹¹ The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day. ¹² For the day of the LORD of hosts *Shall come* upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up-- And it shall be brought low-- ¹³ Upon all the cedars of Lebanon *that are* high and lifted up, And upon all the oaks of Bashan; ¹⁴ Upon all the high mountains, And upon all the hills *that are* lifted up; ¹⁵ Upon every high tower, And upon every fortified wall; ¹⁶ Upon all the ships of Tarshish, And upon all the beautiful sloops. ¹⁷ The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day, ¹⁸ But the idols He shall utterly abolish. ¹⁹ They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily. ²⁰ In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver And his idols of gold, Which they made, *each* for himself to worship, To the moles and bats, ²¹ To go into the clefts of the rocks, And into the crags of the rugged rocks, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily.

Isaiah seems to be prophesying what John is actually seeing here when Jesus breaks the sixth seal.

In verse 12 Isaiah is telling us that he is writing about the Day of the Lord, and he says—

"In that day..." (verse 20) people will *"go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks"* [to hide themselves] *"from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when he arises to shake the earth mightily."* (verse 21)

The language of Isaiah's prophecy indicates that the sixth seal will be within, not *before*, the Day of the Lord—and therefore will be a part of the Day of the Lord's wrath.

As one author said—

"The fact that unbelievers wait till the sixth seal is broken to say that the Day of God's wrath has already come could simply be explained by the fact that it wasn't until the cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal that they realize that—all of the things that have been taking place during the first 5 seals have actually been the wrath, the judgments of God being poured out on the earth."

How do the people of the earth living at that time understand in the first place what is going on (seals = judgments etc.)

Remember, that the Two Witnesses (and all their converts to Christianity) have been preaching to the people of the world since the very beginning of the Tribulation Period that the cataclysmic upheavals the world has been experiencing are in fact God's wrath—but the Antichrist and his followers have been explaining these judgments away. (see Revelation 11)

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*.'

One author agrees with this conclusion—

"The way these unbelievers finally figured out what was going on was, no doubt, the tribulation saints were preaching to them during the first 5 seal judgments that God was in fact judging them for their immorality and idolatry. It was a message these unbelievers didn't want to hear and so they killed many of these tribulation saints for their witness—which is what the fifth seal is all about." (the slaughter and martyrdom of God's Tribulation saints)

But here's the rebuttal that the Pre-Wrath Rapture community gives to this interpretation:

They say, "How can you say that the judgments of Revelation 6:12—"***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***" are part of the Day of the Lord judgments when Acts 2:19-20 (Peter quoting from Joel 2:30-31) seems to clearly say that these things come **BEFORE** the "Day of the Lord?"

(Give background on Acts 2:16-20)

Acts 2:16-20 (NKJV)

¹⁶ But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ¹⁷ *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. ¹⁸ And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. ¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

The "**day of the Lord**" is a phrase that is used specifically 19 times in the Old Testament. and 4 times in the New Testament.

Acts 2:20 (quoting Joel 2:31); 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10. (Some associate "*the day of the Lord*" with what Peter said in 2 Peter 3:12 when he mentioned "*the day of God*"—but **they are not the same thing** as we will see).

It is also referred to as the “*day of wrath*” in Zephaniah 1:15; and the “*day of darkness*” in Joel 2:2 and Zephaniah 1:15

Scholar and New Testament Professor Renald Showers—

“*The Day of the Lord refers to God’s special interventions into the course of world events to judge His enemies, accomplish His purpose for history, and thereby demonstrate who He is—the sovereign God of the universe.*”

The Bible indicates that there have been several local ‘*day of the Lord*’ judgments that took place in the Old Testament period when God raised up several nations to execute judgment on other nations.

For example, God raised up Babylon to judge the southern kingdom of Judah during the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

We also read in the O.T. how God used Babylon to judge Egypt—and Medo-Persia to judge Babylon in the 6th BC—for example:

Ezekiel 30:2-4 (NKJV)

²“Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Wail, ‘Woe to the day!’ ³For the day *is* near, Even the day of the Lord *is* near; It will be a day of clouds, the time of the Gentiles. ⁴The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia...”

These were *local* ‘day of the Lord’ judgments upon nations during the Old Testament period—but they also were a foreshadowing of the future ‘Day of the Lord’ judgments that will be *worldwide* during the 7-year Tribulation Period.

Often in the same passage there is a *local* day of the Lord judgment mentioned but then the prophecy broadens and ‘scopes out’ to talk about the future *worldwide* Day of the Lord judgments—for example:

Isaiah 13:6-9 (NKJV)

⁶ Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand (local judgment pronounced upon Babylon—v.1)! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷ Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man's heart will melt, ⁸ And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces *will be like* flames. ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.

Now the language broadens to include the whole world in a future ultimate Day of the Lord judgment—

Isaiah 13:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine [sixth seal of Revelation 6]. ¹¹ “I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger...”

One author elaborates—

“*The Old Testament prophets used the expression to describe both near historical judgments (Isaiah 13:6–22; Ezekiel 30:2–19; Joel 1:15; Amos 5:18–20; Zephaniah 1:14–18) and distant eschatological [end times] judgments*”

(Joel 2:30–32; 3:14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:1, 5). Six times they call it “**the day of doom**” and four times “**the day of vengeance**.”

These are horrifying judgments from God (cf. Joel 2:30–31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–10) rendered because of the world’s overwhelming sinfulness.”

Let me stop and bring in something Peter said in his second epistle that I think is important that we understand—

2 Peter 3:10-13 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

Bible scholars and teachers have debated—does the Bible teach that there is one more catastrophic, world-wide judgment that is coming (Tribulation Period—Revelation 6-19)—or two (the Tribulation Period and the total annihilation of the physical universe)?

Most Bible scholars say one more is coming and yet—the Bible does talk about both the Tribulation Period and the total annihilation of the physical universe (as Peter mentions in 2 Peter 3:10-13).

That sounds like two more world-wide judgments that are coming separated by the Millennial Kingdom.

The answer to that question lies in our understanding of the term the “**day of the Lord**” which Peter makes reference to and associates with the physical universe being vaporized in future judgment.

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

“**Day of the Lord**” is a term used in Scripture to describe God’s cataclysmic judgments on the wicked.

The “**Day of the Lord**” (as Peter uses it) is not a literal ‘day’, but a *period of time* that will start with the breaking of the first seal (Revelation 6:1-2) and will end with the destruction of the present material universe by God (2 Peter 3:10) before He creates a “**new heavens and a new earth.**” (2 Peter 3:13)

To really understand the ‘Day of the LORD’, you need to understand a standard Jewish day.

➤ The Jewish day is from sundown to sundown—just as it will be with the “Day of The Lord”.

It will start with the darkness of judgment during the Tribulation Period which will then be followed by the dawn of a new day in the history of mankind (the Kingdom Age)—a time of glorious *light* (God’s truth, righteousness, and justice) as Jesus reigns over the whole earth from Jerusalem.

The “day” of the Kingdom Age (one-thousand years in duration) will end with the ‘darkness of judgment’ (Great White Throne Judgment-Revelation 20:11-15) after which God will destroy heaven and earth—which will be the final act of God’s judgment.

The Bible then says He will recreate it, and we will move from time into eternity ('eternal state')—the ultimate and never ending 'day.'

The term "*day of God*" (2 Peter 3:12) is not the same as the "*day of the Lord*" (2 Peter 3:10).

Again, the "*day of the Lord*" refers to the time of world-wide judgment from the coming of the Antichrist to the destruction of the physical universe.

The "*day of God*" refers to the eternal state consisting of the 'new heavens, new earth and new Jerusalem'—the place where believers will live for all eternity (probably in a brand-new dimensionality).

Peter admonishes believers, considering the transitory nature of this present world—to live lives of holy conduct and godliness, because, as John the apostle said: "*the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*" (1 John 2:17)

Peter seems to add that by living this way we can actually—"**hasten the coming of the day of God**".

Some commentators believe that we, as Christians, can hasten the coming of the day of God by living godly lives, praying, witnessing so as to bring others to faith in Christ etc.

Others say that there is nothing believers can do to rush or hasten the coming of the eternal state since the 'day of God' will only come *after* the Millennial Kingdom takes place (a definite 1000-year period of time).

They rather favor the translation of verse 12—not '*hastening the coming*' but '*desiring earnestly the coming*' (RSV) or realizing that we are "*rapidly approaching the coming*" (KJV)—*so start living a life of holiness and godliness etc.*

Once again, Peter goes on to tell us that eventually (after the Millennial Kingdom) the Lord Jesus will go on to destroy the entire physical universe (corrupted by the Fall) before creating a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem where the righteous will live for eternity.

2 Peter 3:13 (NKJV)

¹³ **Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens [new universe] and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.**

Revelation 21:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ² Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

The original creation that God said was 'good' was corrupted by sin and therefore—He destroys it and creates a new universe, earth and Jerusalem—that is untainted by sin.

Isaiah 65:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

Back to our study in Revelation 6.

This idea of the Day of the Lord starting in darkness (judgment) followed by light (the reign of Jesus Christ and the Millennial Kingdom)—is seen in several Old Testament references.

For example, Joel, after talking about the darkening of the sun, moon and stars and God’s Day of the Lord judgment on the armies of the nations gathered against Israel (Joel 3:9-16)—then foretold of a time of great divine blessings that were to follow, “in that day” (Joel 3:17-21).

The prophet Zechariah, after laying out the future Day of the Lord judgments when all nations will war against Jerusalem and the Messiah will come to the earth to fight against the nations (Zechariah 14:1-5)—then Zechariah said “that day” will not be characterized totally by either darkness or light; instead, that “one day” would be characterized by both darkness and light.

The earlier part of that day (Day of the Lord) would be characterized by darkness and the latter part by light—

Zechariah 14:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ And in that day it shall be *That* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur. ⁹ And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be-- "The LORD is one," And His name one.

➤ “Yes, but what about Acts 2:19-20 where Peter is quoting Joel 2:30-31 where God says—

Acts 2:19-20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. ²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

Again, I believe that the Day of the Lord technically begins with the breaking of the first seal which brings the Antichrist into power on the world scene.

This will then be followed by the next 4 seals that will include: war, famine, pestilence, and death. This will be followed by the breaking of the sixth seal—

Revelation 6:12-14 (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. 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. ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

Now it is true that in both Acts 2 and Joel 2 God prophesied that cosmic disturbances would occur *before* the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.

These cosmic disturbances don’t happen until the sixth seal is broken (sometime during the second half of the 7-year period). And yet I’m claiming the day of the Lord has already begun with the opening of the first seal and confirmed by the testimony of the unbelievers who cried out in verse 17—

Revelation 6:17 (NKJV)

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

Once more, the Greek verse 17 says, “For the great day of His wrath has already come...” ***not “is about the start.”***

In other words, it has already begun with the first 5 seals—so how do we explain this?

The 70th week of Daniel (the final 7-year period) will start with *tribulation* (the beginnings of birth pangs—Matthew 24:4-8) and be followed by *great tribulation* (the pangs of hard labor—Matthew 24:9-14) culminating in the return of Christ and the birth of the Kingdom Age (Matthew 24:29-30).

Even so, the Day of the Lord will begin with *lesser* Day of the Lord judgments (first 5 seals) and will progress into great and awesome Day of the Lord judgments during the second half of the Tribulation Period which is also called the Great Tribulation. (Clarify)

Acts 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ *The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

That is how you can have Scriptures talking about the Day of the Lord being already in progress and then they talk about the great and awesome Day of the Lord about to begin.

This is what some commentators call the “broad” and “narrow” aspects of the Day of the Lord.

Malachi 4:5 (NKJV)

⁵ **Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.**

I believe that Elijah the prophet will be one of the Two Witnesses in Revelation 11.

The ministry of the Two Witnesses has to take place before the ‘great and dreadful’ Day of the Lord begins (the Great Tribulation Period)—Malachi 4:5 tells us.

Which means their ministry will have to primarily fall within the first half of the Tribulation Period. (1260 days—Revelation 11:3)

Revelation 11:3 (NKJV)

And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

And yet as we study their ministry, we will clearly see that they are instruments of God’s judgment on the earth during that time as well.

So, their ministry will be a part of the Day of the Lord judgment but still be conducted before the coming of the ‘great and dreadful Day of the Lord.’ (Malachi 4:5 and Acts 2:20)

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