

REVELATION

Seals 5-7

Revelation 6:15-16

March 23, 2024

Last week we reviewed the 4 Horsemen of Revelation 6. We discovered that they represent God's people through history, their response to the Gospel and the devastating consequences of rejecting the Gospel.

Let's turn our attention briefly to the Gospels. There is a close connection between the 7 seals of Revelation 6 and the words of Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. In these chapters, Jesus gave His disciples a glimpse of what would happen on earth from their time to the end of time:

- 1 - Jesus described the realities of life on earth in terms of wars, rumors of wars, famine, pestilence, persecution, earthquakes, spiritual deceptions and heavenly signs (Matthew 24:4-14).
- 2 - Jesus talked about a long period of history, from the destruction of Jerusalem (70 AD) until the Great Tribulation, where God's people would experience severe persecution (v. 15-28).
- 3 - Jesus pointed to Heavenly signs that would indicate that the 2nd Coming was quickly approaching, followed by specific signs announcing His imminent arrival (v. 29-31).

These events also occur in Revelation 6.

If we compare Leviticus 26, Matthew 24:4-14 and Revelation 6:1-8 we see that all three serve the same function – to keep God's people awake and prepared for Christ's 2nd Coming.

We will now turn our attention to the 3 remaining seals.

- **5th Seal = Saints under the altar** (6:9-11)

As Jesus breaks the 5th seal, John's attention is drawn to an altar.

The Old Testament temple had 2 altars:

- The Altar of *SACRIFICE* was in the court **outside** the temple.
- The Altar of *INCENSE* was **inside** the temple.

The altar John sees is the Altar of Sacrifice (Lev 4:7; 8:15; 9:9).

Under this altar are the "souls" of the martyrs. "Soul" in the Bible is a term used to describe the whole person (Genesis 2:7) NOT some wispy, disconnected entity.

This scene reminds us of the blood that was poured out at the base of the Altar of Sacrifice in the earthly Sanctuary.

- Exodus 29:12 - Take some of the bull's blood and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar.

And Paul's declaration in 2 Timothy 4:6:

- For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

Remember this is symbolic. The spirits of those who have died for their faith in Jesus are not all huddled under an altar in heaven. It is a representation of their sacrifice for the cause of Christ:

- Matthew 10:22 - All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

- **Matthew 24:9** – Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.
- **Luke 21:16-17** – You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. All men will hate you because of me.

John listens as the martyrs cry out to God:

- “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You not judge and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?” – 6:10

The suffering and death of those who have died for the cause of Christ is unjust. The cry of the martyrs is for justice to be done and their to be names cleared. This applies to every person who has died for Jesus, beginning with Abel.

God responds in 2 ways – v. 11:

- 1st - They are given a White Robe (symbol of Christ’s righteousness given to overcomers).
- 2nd - They are told that they must wait for a little while until those who must go through a similar martyrdom are made complete. In most Bibles you will find the word “number” – interpreted to mean that a specific quantity of martyrs must be reached before Jesus comes. However, “number” is not in the original Greek text. The text is not referring to a specific number of Martyrs, but to the perfecting/refining of their characters – as indicated by those overcomers who have received Christ’s robe of righteousness.

While the 5th Seal represents the experience of God’s oppressed people throughout history, it may also apply to a specific period in history (the middle/dark ages). During this period, it is estimated that more than 50 million Christians were martyred because of their faithfulness to the Bible. The prophecies of Daniel speak of the enemy power, described as a little horn “waging war with the saints and overpowering them for a time, times and ½ a time” (Dan. 7:21-27; 12:6-7). As we know, this is a prophetic period of 1260 days / years (538-1798).

God has promised that He will vindicate His people and avenge their blood:

- **Deuteronomy 32:43** – Rejoice, O nations, with his people, and let all the angels worship him for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.
- **Psalms 79:10** – Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” Before our eyes, make known among the nations that you avenge the outpoured blood of your servants.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:4-10** – Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring. All this is evidence that God’s judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

The fulfillment of Paul’s prophecy in 2nd Thessalonians is the subject of the 6th Seal.

- **6th Seal = Judgments against those who have harmed God’s people.** (6:12-17)

As Jesus breaks the 6th seal Cosmic and cataclysmic signs appear.

The same events are foretold in Matthew 24:29-30.

- **Matthew 24:29-30** – Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

And are similar to the prophecies of Isaiah:

- **Isaiah 2:19** – Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth.
- **Isaiah 13:6-10** – Wail, for the day of the LORD is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty. Because of this, all hands will go limp, every man's heart will melt. Terror will seize them; pain and anguish will grip them; they will writhe like a woman in labor. They will look aghast at each other, their faces aflame. See, the day of the LORD is coming --a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger -- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.
- **Isaiah 34:2-4** – The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is upon all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be thrown out, their dead bodies will send up a stench; the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars of the heavens will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.

Christians in the Western World recognized the partial fulfillment of these prophecies:

- 1755 – Lisbon Earthquake
- 1780 (May 19) – Dark Day and Moon turns to blood over eastern New York and southern New England.
- 1833 (Nov. 13) – Spectacular meteor shower over the Atlantic Ocean
- The sky being rolled up as a scroll has not yet occurred.

Which led to a series of revivals in North America known as the Second Great Awakening.

It is suggested that these supernatural events will happen again at Christ's return..... Stay tuned.

Facing impending judgment, the wicked from all walks of life call for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of God and the Lamb. They ask a question: *"The great day of His wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

- **Nahum 1:6** - Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger?
- **Malachi 3:2** - Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?

Revelation 7 will answer that question, but we will skip chapter 7 for the moment and jump to 8:1 = the 7th Seal.

- **7th Seal = (8:1)**

As Jesus breaks the 7th seal there is silence in heaven for ½ hour.

John does not explain the reason for this silence in heaven.

In the Old Testament, silence is regularly associated with the coming of God in judgment:

- **Habakkuk 2:20** – But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.
- **Zephaniah 1:7** – Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near....
- **Zechariah 2:13** – Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.

The Jews of John's day believed that silence occurred in heaven so that the prayers of the saints could be heard and answered in judgment on the wicked.

We are living in the time of the 6th Seal. The silence of the 7th seal is in the future, but is a relatively short period of time, and occurs at the 2nd Coming of Jesus.

Next week: Revelation 7.