

The Fifth and Sixth Seal

Revelation 6:9-17

Introduction: The first four seals were represented by four different horses and were presented to John by the four beasts (chapter 4). The next two have more description given to them than the first four and the last one (the seventh) actually opens up the seven trumpet judgments (chapters 8-11).

I. THE FIFTH SEAL – VS. 9-11



A. The vision

1. John saw “the souls of them that were slain” – martyrs for Christ
 - a) “For the word of God”
 - b) “For the testimony which they held”

2. Their position was "under the altar"
3. Their cry, or prayer, to be avenged by the judgment of the Lord
4. Their clothing – they were given "white robes" (this John saw take place)
5. They were told (doesn't say by whom) to rest until they were joined by the tribulation martyrs

B. The meaning

1. Their position "under the altar"
 - a) We cannot be certain as to what the "altar" here is referring. In the Tabernacle worship there were two altars – the altar of burnt offering in the court and the altar of incense right outside the Holy of Hollies.
 - b) Whether or not it is referring to one of these we cannot be certain
 - c) It is a vision that John saw in representing the martyrs and it is logical to interpret the altar here as representative of the sacrifice that the martyrs had made
 - d) In being "under" the altar would appear to be pointing to that sacrifice, and that they were in a place now of refuge (referred to when they were told to "rest" in verse 11)
2. John is said to have seen "the souls of them" – what John saw cannot be determined with certainty as to whether he saw visible beings or just a form that

represented the martyrs

- a) Considering this vision takes place after the rapture, and these martyrs were from the time before the rapture, then it can be safely interpreted that they would have had their glorified bodies
- b) Quite often in the writings of this time period the term "soul" is not only referencing the actual "soul" of man (which can't be seen) but also the whole being of man – including his body
- c) The word is often translated (36 out of 105 times) in the NT with the English word "life" – representing the whole being

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your **life**, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the **life** more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his **life** a ransom for many.

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my **life** dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

- d) So, it is probable that the "souls" John saw were the glorified beings that had been martyred

3. "That had been slain"

- a) "For the word of God" – they died because of their belief in, and support of, the word of God
 - b) "For the testimony which they held" – it was their belief in and their support of the Word of God that gave them such a testimony
 - c) There will be millions there – most that have studied this put the number to date at 70 million (but this is probably far lower than it actually is)
4. Their cry was to ask God how long it would be before He would avenge them (vs. 10)
- a) The word for "cried" is one that literally means to shriek (as the sound of a raven), or scream – by application, as in our text, it means that they were crying out with loud voices, indicating an urgency and overwhelming emotion
 - b) They refer to God as being "holy and true" – it is in these attributes that God brings judgment upon the wicked
 - c) The song is sung by the angels holding the "vials" in chapter 15, as they bring the judgments of God upon the earth, pointing to this aspect of God's attributes as He does avenge them
 - d) There is a song sung by the angels holding the "vials" in chapter 15, as they bring the judgments of God upon the earth, pointing to this aspect of God's attributes as He does avenge them – as He answers their cry

Revelation 15:3-4 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. (4) Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5. They were given “white robes” – vs. 11 – simply points to their purity and holiness, and to their testimony, and the white robes were their reward

Revelation 3:4-5 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. (5) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

Revelation 7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

6. They were given the command to “rest ye for a little season” – vs. 11

- a) Doesn't say who was speaking but it can be safe to consider it to be the Lamb that was slain
- b) They were to rest and wait to be joined by the tribulation martyrs (referred to in the above verses)
- c) These martyrs have a special place awaiting them, a special place in the heart of the Saviour as well

C. The application

1. One application in relation to those slain for their testimony brings to mind the question, "How is our testimony?" Would it be worthy enough to cause us to die if we live in a time, or place, where the penalty for living for Christ was death?
2. How do we respond when we hear someone has died for their faith? Many, even of God's children, simply turn a deaf ear and don't care. Keep in mind, Jesus cares!

Conclusion to this point: (show video from Voice of the Martyrs)

II. THE SIXTH SEAL – VS. 12-17



A. The vision

1. "A great earthquake" – the description of the effects of this earthquake on the earth are described in verse 14b
2. "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair"
3. "The moon became as blood"
4. "The stars of heaven fell unto the earth" – vs. 13-14a
5. Vs. 15-16 show the effect of the darkness and the horror of the events that take place

B. The meaning

Most of the meaning here is self-explanatory

1. These events follow the others in order as they occur on earth
2. The earthquake is literal – apparently this is an earthquake that causes massive destruction worldwide – vs. 14b
3. The sun as “black as sackcloth of hair” is going to be literal as well – and it is this, I believe, that causes the mass hysteria and panic described in vs. 15-16
 - a) The sackcloth was used in both Old and New Testaments to represent mourning
 - b) Made of black hair was not common – it was usually a dingy, somewhat muted color – a ghastly looking thing
 - c) The sun being black as the hair of a sackcloth means it will be completely dark on earth as far as natural light goes

Matthew 24:29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Isaiah 13:9-10 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. (10) 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.

Joel 2:30-31 And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. (31) The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

4. The moon (the whole moon, the full moon) becoming "as blood" is also going to happen literally – and it will be an awful sight indeed
 - a) This could happen from all the smoke and ash that goes up from the earthquake – and viewing the moon through that would, in fact, make it look like blood
 - b) Or, it could just be that God changes its color to that for all the world to see His power
5. "The stars of heaven" fall to earth as a fig tree that loses its figs when it is blown by a fierce wind
 - a) This is speaking of meteors and "shooting stars" as we call them
 - b) This is described in the first part of verse 14 as heaven departing "as a scroll when it is rolled together" – the stars are shaken to earth as if God takes the sky and shakes it out like we would a dirty rug
 - c) This is a quote from a verse in Isaiah
Isaiah 34:1-4 Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of

it. (2) For the indignation of the LORD *is* upon all nations, and *his* fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. (3) Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood. (4) And all the host of heaven 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.

6. Verses 15-16 show that all of the earth is affected – every person on it – not just the poor, as in the third seal, but everyone, rich and poor alike
7. They are said to want to die because of “him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” – again, speaking of one-and-the-same Person, the Son of God

C. The application – vs. 17

1. The question is asked in this verse “who shall be able to stand?”
2. Those that are here during the Tribulation, during the time this seal represents, will be so lost, so hopeless, they will want to die – and they will recognize Who it is that is causing their grief
3. The thing to remember is those during this time were here before the Rapture took

place and will have no desire for mercy
(which they are not seen as asking for
here) – just to die

Conclusion: Where will you be when these seals are
opened? Where will you be when the book is read?