

## Things to Come

### #11 Seals 5 & 6 and then a Time Out (Rev. 6:9-11 and 7:1-8)

#### I. Introduction

While God is a loving, merciful sovereign who graciously offered His son on mankind's behalf, He is also a God of vengeance.

Deuteronomy 32:35 "It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them."

Psalms 64:7-9 "But God will shoot them with his arrows; they will suddenly be struck down. He will turn their own tongues against them and bring them to ruin; all who see them will shake their heads in scorn. All people will fear; they will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done."

Isa. 34:1-3, 8 "Come near, you nations, and listen; pay attention, you peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that is in it, the world, and all that comes out of it! The LORD is angry with all nations; his wrath is on 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 stink; the mountains will be soaked with their blood.... For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of retribution, to uphold Zion's cause."

Malachi 4:1-2 "Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and the day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. <sup>2</sup> But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays. And you will go out and frolic like well-fed calves."

II Thess. 1:6-9 "God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might"

There is a day coming when God will take vengeance on the wicked. We call that day "The Day of the Lord." It will be devastating for the evildoers and perhaps "bittersweet" for the believers. Consider Revelation 10:8-10

#### II. The Fifth Seal (6:9-11)

A. When: Likely at the end of the first half of the tribulation.

Before the "Abomination of Desolation":

See Daniel 9:27, 12:11 and II Thess. 2:3-4

- B. The "force" that is released is the power of the prayers of the martyrs
- C. What does John actually see? Martyrs!
1. The persecution is worldwide (Matt. 24:9). The slaughter will be massive (Rev. 7:9-14).
  2. "Underneath the altar": Because of the association of incense with prayer (Ps. 141:2, Luke 1:10 and Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4), it is likely the altar of incense in the tabernacle/temple (Ex. 40:5).
  3. "The souls of those slain": The Greek word could refer to the disembodied souls of those slain, or it could refer to their actual lives. John is seeing them in the temple of heaven.
    - Those killed on earth: 18:24
    - Those beheaded: 20:4
    - Those killed because they refuse the mark of the beast: 13:15
  4. Two reasons for their martyrdom:
    - a. Because they are correctly interpreting the events going on around them in accordance with God's word.
    - b. Because of their loyalty to Christ (See 12:17, 19:10 and 20:4)
  5. Their petition: "How long Lord will you refrain from avenging our blood?" (Luke 18:7-8)
    - a. Contrast this prayer with the one Stephen prayed before his martyrdom (Acts 7:60).
    - b. Their appeal is based on God's holiness (He must judge sin-Acts 10:42, Rom. 2:16 Hab. 1:13) and because He is true (He is faithful to His word-Num. 23:19, I Sam. 15:29)
    - c. The grace period (see II Peter 3:9)
  6. The Promise: "a little while longer"
 

Notice the white robe: a symbol of the glory ascribed to these saints.

### **III. The Sixth Seal (6:12-17)**

God is going to intervene in human history! (See I Thess. 5:1-4)

- A. This seal (which is often associated with "The Day of the Lord") unleashes the force of fear. The fear is predicated on:
1. A great earthquake

2. The sun becoming black
  3. The moon appearing blood red
  4. Stars falling from the sky
  5. The sky is split apart
  6. Mountains and islands are moved
- B. Seven categories of people react in abject fear. They do not repent; they panic.
- C. So who can stand? Answer: none of the unrighteous! The ungodly will not escape the wrath of almighty God.

#### **IV. An Interlude (7:1-8)**

- A. The angels of destruction will be held back until representatives of the 12 tribes of Israel are sealed.
1. The four corners of the earth likely refer to the four points on a compass.
  2. "Sealing" refers to the work of the Holy Spirit that ensures salvation for the believer (See II Cor. 1:22, Eph. 1:13). It is not a guarantee of protection from harm. God's people do suffer. It is a divine mark of ownership.
- B. The 144,000
1. I believe this is a literal figure and that it refers to 144,000 Jewish Christians. Some see these people as the New Testament church. But I believe that Israel has a literal future in the end times.
  2. Regarding the order of the tribes:  
There are some 19 different ways that the tribes are listed in the Old Testament: according to birth order (Gen. 29-35), in order of Jacob's blessing (Gen. 49), in the order of how they encamped as they traveled (Numbers 2), in order of the census (Num. 26), in the order of the blessings and curses (Deut. 27), in the order of Moses blessing them (Deut. 33), in the order of the inheritances and land allocations (Joshua 13-22), in the order of the wives/concubines (I Chron. 2-8) and the order of the gates of the city (Ezek. 48).
  3. Regarding the missing tribes (Dan and Ephraim): We are uncertain...but, both were consumed with idolatry.
  4. The message is that God is not yet through with the nation of Israel!

#### **V. So What?**

God is not slack concerning His promises...to Israel or to us!  
See II Peter 3:1-9