

# THE REVELATION

## *The Faithful Await His Coming*

Revelation 6:9-17

With the 5th and 6th seals there is another dramatic turn in the sequence of events in the Revelation. The 5th seal reveals the people under the altar and their question, and the 6th seal, which begins in chapter 6 and continues through chapter 7, takes us to the very end of human history and the final judgment. I want to consider two essential themes from these sections in our study today: one is a bit more academic and concerns the sequence of events leading into the Great Tribulation; the other is a bit more introspective and concerns the nature of Christian martyrdom as a part of the battle for God's triumph in the last days.

### I. The Sequence of Events & Judgments in Revelation

- A. There are three sets of judgments with seven in each set:
  - 1. The 7 seals of the scroll: Revelation 6:1-8:1
  - 2. The 7 trumpets of God: Revelation 8:2-11:19
  - 3. The 7 bowls of wrath: Revelation 15:1-16:21
- B. These three sets of seven do not follow each other in chronological sequence
  - 1. The first four seals predate the Great Tribulation and occur without a specific duration or time frame. We may be living right now in the period of the first four seals.
  - 2. The 5th seal is probably the beginning of the Great Tribulation
  - 3. The first five trumpets probably sound during the period of the 5th-6th seals
  - 4. The first five bowls of wrath probably are poured out during the period of the 5th-6th trumpet
- C. Consequently, the three sets of judgment are expansive, one within the other, until we reach the 6th number of each one—then all of them catch up together in a single event; also followed by the simultaneous occurrence of the seventh number of all three sets
- D. In all probability, the 6th in the series represents the rapture of the Church, while the 7th in the series represents the visible return of Christ in His body to this earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to establish His Millennial Kingdom

### II. The Deeper Question: The Martyrs of the Church, Now and in the Great Tribulation

- A. The "souls" under the Altar
  - 1. This is the first time we are told about an altar or about any believers being there
  - 2. Under the altar is a place of special honor
  - 3. Their cry and question is both plaintive and profound—it relates to the delay of Christ's return and to the suffering of the Saints
- B. The implication of the answer from the Throne (v11)
  - 1. There is a "number" of believers to be martyred for their faith
  - 2. God has chosen/permitted that number to be slain
  - 3. Martyrdom is not our worst death...it may be our best
- C. The Martyr's Crown
  - 1. Jesus, Who was seated in the heavenlies, stood to welcome Stephen (Acts 7:55)
  - 2. Suffering for Christ is always presented as a blessing and privilege in the New Testament
  - 3. Suffering unto death is promised a Crown in the heavenly kingdom (Rev. 2:10)
- D. How do you view suffering for the cause of Christ and His Name? What is your "theology of suffering"? Are you ready and willing to follow Christ until the end of the journey, even if it means death for Him?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain how the three sets of seven judgments fit together in the unfolding of end-time events.
2. As you scan over these three sets of judgment, do they seem to remain about the same, or do they seem to decrease or increase in severity?
3. At what point in the sequence of events does the Great Tribulation seem to begin?
4. Discuss the meaning of the martyred believers' question, those who are waiting beneath the altar in heaven.
5. Explain your understanding of suffering for the cause and name of Christ. How does it fit into the prosperity gospel or an "easy" Christian life?

### NOTES

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.

10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

12 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red,

13 and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.

14 The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

15 Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

16 They called to the mountains and the 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 their wrath has come, and who can stand?"  
(Rev 6:9-17 NIV)

"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.'

30 "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.

31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

32 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.

33 Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

34 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.

35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

36 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;

39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. (Mat 24:29-39 NIV)

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