

The Fifth Seal

Revelation 6:9-11

It is always a privilege to come together with God's people and worship, to meet with God and to sing his praises and to bow before his holy Word. Will you take your Bibles this morning and turn to Revelation chapter six as we continue to make our way through this marvelous prophecy?

This morning we find ourselves in verses nine through 11. Follow along as I read Revelation six verse nine.

And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.¹

I have much to say by way of introduction before we examine this text. As we think about Christian martyrdom, we also understand that we live in a world today that hates Christ. In fact, Christianity has been under attack from the very beginning. The Romans tried to eliminate Christianity by killing Christians, but that failed. Islam has tried to eliminate Christians by way of the sword and that has failed. And even today Communists and Marxists in the United States attack Christianity through the ACLU, through the liberal media, through politicians and that, too, will fail.

We can look around and we can see that Humanists, idolaters, Atheists—whether they be practical Atheists or practicing Atheists—dominate our colleges and our universities and most of the religious enterprises around the world all in an attempt to somehow thwart the purposes of God and defeat Christianity. Christ haters are now in control of our public education in the United States. They are in control of our entertainment industry and even our government. Recently our president spoke at Georgetown University, a Catholic University. And at the request of the Whitehouse they covered up all of the Christian symbols in Gaston Hall including the millennia old monogram for the name of Jesus Christ. Well, examples like this abound and it would be, frankly, futile for me to try to elaborate on them. You are aware of them. It is little wonder why *Newsweek* magazine would have as its recent cover story during the holy week of Easter an article entitled, "The End of Christian America."

Indeed, we are witnessing even in our day a slow death of the United States of America, especially of Christianity within it. Our freedoms are being systematically taken away from us. Very few pulpits these days faithfully and boldly proclaim the truth of the Word of God. In fact, apostate Christianity is no longer the exception. It is now the rule. All you need to do is go to our Christian bookstores and you will see that. And true Christ honoring Bible believing churches are now being marginalized and criticized for being

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intolerant. I receive a few emails every month along that line, to the point now where many people even in our country, not to mention in other parts around the world, consider Christians to be hate mongers, to be bigots, to be wild eyed apocalyptic cult members, radical right wing extremists worthy of the title of terrorist.

Now, of course, this should be no surprise to any of us because they crucified our Lord. In fact, the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Timothy three and verse 12 that:

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.²

Indeed, we have no reason to fear or to fret because the Lord has promised to build his church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it. But we must recognize that our real enemy is not the government. It is not Islam. It is not secular humanism, nor is it any other kind of ism, but it is Satan and his demonic forces. He is the great deceiver who God has allowed to be the temporary “god of this world” according to 1 Corinthians four and verse four; the one that has, “blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.”³

We read in 1 John 5:19 that, “The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.”⁴ He is the wicked one who has opposed God’s elect people as well as his covenant people Israel. In fact, Scripture repeatedly acknowledges that at the very center of Satan’s rage is his determination to nullify the covenant promises that God has made to Israel and to establish his glorious kingdom on earth. In fact, for hundreds of years Jerusalem has been a forgotten byword. As Zechariah says, “a burdensome stone or an immovable rock for all of the nations,”⁵ Zechariah 12:3. But now it is at the very heart of world conflict.

In fact, in our life time we have seen the re-gathering of God’s people whom he scattered and now they are coming back into their ancient land in unbelief as the prophets predicted. And Jesus has promised that he is one day going to return to the Mount of Olives and that he is going to establish his throne, the throne of his kingdom in Jerusalem on Mount Zion and build his temple on Mount Moriah. And today the temple mount is the most contested piece of real estate in the world. You see, all of this is unacceptable to Satan and his demonic principalities. In fact, he currently has his own version of a temple on that site, the Muslim’s Al-Aqsa mosque.

Joel speaks of a day when the Lord will return. This is a day that Satan despises. In Joel three verse 16 we read, “The Lord will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem. The earth and the sky will tremble, but the Lord will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel. Then you will know that I, the Lord your God, will dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy. Never again will foreigners invade her.”⁶

² 2 Timothy 3:12-13.

³ 1 Corinthians 4:4.

⁴ 1 John 5:19.

⁵ See Zechariah 12:3.

⁶ See Joel 3:16-17.

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And then in verse 20 he adds, “Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations.”⁷ Even as the prophet Zechariah said in chapter 14 and verse nine, “The Lord will be king over all the earth; on that day there will be one Lord and his name the only name.”⁸

Dear friends, these are the decreed purposes of God that Satan seeks to thwart and he tries to do so at all costs. He knows that his time is short, so he aggressively seeks to establish his counterfeit kingdom and, of course, that requires the elimination of the saints in the church as well as the elimination of the covenant people of Israel, the people of promise.

But despite the hostility of the world’s system, we must remember that we are called to love our enemies. We are to pray that God will be merciful to them and that he will save them because a day is coming when grace will cease to be available and it will be replaced by a season of judgment. There will come a day of vengeance when God will punish not only those who mock him and reject his Son the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, but also those who have persecuted what are now his beloved enemy Israel, his covenant people.

The prophets speak of this day of vengeance that is coming. Isaiah says in chapter 34 verse one:

Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it. For the LORD’S indignation is against all the nations, And His wrath against all their armies; He has utterly destroyed them, He has given them over to slaughter. So their slain will be thrown out, And their corpses will give off their stench, And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.⁹

In verse eight he goes on to say, “For the LORD has a day of vengeance, A year of recompense for the cause of Zion.”¹⁰ Likewise Jeremiah tells us in chapter 46 and verse 10, “For that day belongs to the Lord GOD of hosts, A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; And the sword will devour and be satiated And drink its fill of their blood; For there will be a slaughter for the Lord GOD of hosts, In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.”¹¹

The prophet Malachi, likewise, says in chapter four and verse one, “‘For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.’”¹² And then in verse three he continues to speak to

⁷ See Joel 3:20.

⁸ See Zechariah 14:9.

⁹ Isaiah 34:1-3.

¹⁰ Isaiah 34:8.

¹¹ Jeremiah 46:10.

¹² Malachi 4:1.

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the saints that enter into the kingdom saying, “And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,’ says the LORD of hosts.”¹³

Now, understandably, the world despises this message. It is utterly reprehensible to them. They bristle at the idea of a holy God, one that is righteous, one that demands justice. They refuse to acknowledge that they are ungodly and that they need to be reconciled to that holy God by grace through faith in Christ. They refuse to acknowledge that the ungodly who refuse Jesus as their substitute will themselves bear the wrath of God that abides on them. Yet Nahum the prophet described God in chapter one verse two as, “A jealous and avenging God... The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.”¹⁴

So, beloved, a day of vengeance is coming. And this was at the very heart of our Lord’s Olivet discourse. And, sadly, most have been “given over”—according to Romans chapter one and verse 28—“to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, [and] evil,”¹⁵ and the list goes on. And, as a result of that, any attempt to confront the evils of our day with biblical truth, especially as it relates to the gospel of Christ, results in ridicule and mounting hostility. But please understand. God has made it clear in his Word that the metastasizing corruption of sin is going to increase exponentially as the consummation of redemptive history enters its final days. Because the world despises the truth, a day is rapidly approaching when ridicule will be replaced with violence. And, beloved, this is the context of the fifth seal that we just read in Revelation six and verses nine through 11.

Now, imagine a world as it will be at this time, after the church has been caught up into glory. No longer will there be any salt to prevent moral decay in our world. No longer will there be any light to counteract the darkness of sin. Imagine what it will be like when the restraint of the Holy Spirit is now lifted according to 2 Thessalonians two verses six through eight, when Satan and antichrist will be given full reign to do all that they want to do, to work their deeds of wickedness. This will be a time of unprecedented chaos and confusion and satanic deception. And then you add to this the cataclysmic effects of the first four seals that we have studied—the white horse of counterfeit righteousness and peace that is brought on by the antichrist, a short lived Utopia that will be interrupted by the fiery red horse of world wide wars, followed by the black horse of world wide famine, and on the heels of that horse the ashen horse of death brought on by war, by famine, by disease, by the wild beasts of the earth and earthquakes. So much death, it is so wide spread that it kills, according to the Word, “a fourth of the earth.”¹⁶ And that is a fourth of the earth that is still alive by that time.

Now you must understand that up to this point most of the inhabitants of the earth during the tribulation will refuse to believe that these catastrophes are a result of divine

¹³ Malachi 4:8.

¹⁴ Nahum 1:2.

¹⁵ Romans 1:28-29.

¹⁶ Revelation 6:8.

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judgment. They will continue as they do today to refuse to acknowledge their guilt before a holy God. They will refuse to believe that the unseen hand of God in his providence is orchestrating all of the events of the world to punish the wicked and to summon the lost sheep of Israel to their Messiah. Indeed, they will continue to refuse to believe the Bible. They will continue to “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” as we read in Romans one because they love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

As we study the prophetic Word we understand that a great ecumenical apostate Christianity will become even more galvanized in its hatred of anyone that would dare describe Jesus as a God of wrath and as a God of judgment. And this is consistent with most of, ostensibly Christianity today, as we see in the seeker sensitive movement, as we see in liberal denominations, as we see in the rapidly growing apostate movement of the Emergent Church.

You see, people in that day will prefer even more what people prefer today and that is a “smiley face” Jesus, one that winks at sin, one that loves people of all faiths regardless of what they believe. These phony Christians will continue to propagate the wide gate gospel that leads to destruction that the Lord spoke of in Mathew seven. And these will be the ones that will one day stand in the presence of his glory in judgment. They will stand one day before the very Jesus that they denied in their deceit and hypocrisy and they will say, “Lord, Lord,” only to hear him say, “I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness.”¹⁷

And as we study the prophecies it is evident that the warnings of the first four seals will go unheeded. But by the middle of the tribulation, after the antichrist has desecrated the temple in Jerusalem and demanded that the world worship him, the Lord will open up the sixth seal that we will look at next week, Lord willing, where the earth will shake and there will be unimaginable cosmic chaos. Then at that point there will be no doubt in anyone’s mind that God is the source of the calamities that befall the world. In fact, in verse 16 of Revelation six the inhabitants of the earth will say in that day to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?”¹⁸ And yet, again, this is only “the beginning of birth pains.” The worst is yet to come.

And although it is hard to believe, throughout the tribulation the vast majority of the world will still refuse to repent. Instead, they will blaspheme the God of heaven.

We read, for example, even after the calamities of the fifth bowl in chapter 16 verse 11 that, “they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.”¹⁹ Even after the seventh bowl in chapter 16 and verse 21 we read, “And men blasphemed God because

¹⁷ See Matthew 7:22-23.

¹⁸ Revelation 6:17-18.

¹⁹ Revelation 16:10-11.

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of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.”²⁰ The blasphemy will be led by an apostate Christian church that will be part of a vast ecumenical church led by the false prophet that will make, according to chapter 13 and verse 12, “the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast,”²¹ referring to the antichrist.

And this demonic religious system is called in Revelation 17:5, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”²² Together these religious people will murder those who will be saved during that time. That is why in verse six of Revelation 17 we read, “And I saw the woman,”²³ referring to the apostate church, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, “And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.”²⁴

Dear friends, the hatred of Christ and his Church today will pale in comparison to the rage that will characterize the world during the time of the tribulation. But a day of vengeance is coming, a time when grace will end. There is a time coming when the cup of his indignation will overflow and his wrath will be poured out upon the world. This will be the final day of the Lord, as the prophets tell us, consisting of the eschatological pre-kingdom judgments that will bring an end to human history.

Now may I remind you that the sequence of events and that are described in the tribulation in the book of Revelation parallel Jesus’ prophecies in his Olivet discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 including the intensification of persecution among those who believe in him during that time. In fact, the Lord said in Matthew 24 beginning at verse 16:

Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains. Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house. Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath. For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will. Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.²⁵

My friends, it is this season of divine wrath that is anticipated in the fifth seal. And as we examine these three remarkable verses this morning we will learn three things. Number one, *the price of discipleship*; number two, *the prayer of the martyred*; and, finally, *the promise of the Lord*.

²⁰ Revelation 16:21.

²¹ Revelation 13:12.

²² Revelation 17:5.

²³ Revelation 17:6.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Matthew 24:16-22.

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First, notice *the price of discipleship* as we see it in verse nine, “And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained.”²⁶ Again, it is just prior to the midpoint of the tribulation that John witnesses the Lord Jesus Christ breaking this fifth seal. And like all seals the fifth seal is a force. It is a force of prayer that stirs the almighty to further judgment. You must understand that this seal foretells the coming plagues. It is best to understand these to be the souls of believers martyred during the first half of the tribulation, not the Church in its current state of suffering or martyrs of every age as some would contend. I believe that such interpretations fail to recognize that their persecutors are still alive according to verse 10, “those who dwell on the earth,”²⁷ which is a phrase used throughout the apocalypse to describe men in rebellion to God during the 70th seek judgment.

Because of the prayers of these martyred tribulation saints we see the settled indignation of divine wrath being confirmed by the almighty, a reckoning of a further wrath that will be released in all of its fury in the opening of the sixth seal and the subsequent judgments. You must understand, as well, that this is not a judgment upon saints that produces martyrdom, but a resolute promise of vengeance on those who dwell upon the earth.

Notice verse nine again. “I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain.”²⁸ The word “soul” is a reference to the immaterial part of man. It is used interchangeably in the Bible with the term “spirit.” This refers to the total person as a rationale being that lives forever. These are souls because they do not have a resurrected body as yet because that resurrection will not occur until the close of the tribulation as we have studied. And we read here that they are underneath the altar. This altar is symbolic of the golden altar of incense in the Old Testament, that place where prayers were offered in conjunction with the perpetual burning of incense. And these martyrs were slain, notice, because of the Word of God, “and”—which could be translated “even”—“because of the testimony which they had maintained.”²⁹

You see, at this time many people will search the Word of God. They will see that things are happening that many people had warned them about a few years earlier. They will research the teaching of faithful pastors and teachers who have insisted that the Bible be interpreted literally according to the normal meaning of Scripture. All of the fanciful, allegorical and spiritualizing interpretations will have been proven to be errant by then and they will recognize that even as the hundreds of prophecies up until that time were fulfilled literally, so, too, will be the future prophecies.

So many of these people will be saved “because of the Word of God,” because the Word of God does what? Because the Word of God transforms sinners into saints. The Word of God will transform them into new creatures and their allegiance to Christ will be both conspicuous as well as offensive. And, like all true believers, these dear saints will have manifested their love for Christ through their character, through their conduct and this

²⁶ Revelation 6:9.

²⁷ Revelation 6:10.

²⁸ Revelation 6:9.

²⁹ Ibid.

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will cost them their life. Think of it this way. They will come to Christ on his terms. Even as the Lord said in Luke nine:

If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.³⁰

Jesus spoke of this very time in Matthew 24 and verse nine where we read, “You will be hated by all nations on account of My name.”³¹

It is interesting. Research that I have read of late tells us that more Christians have been martyred for their faith since 1990 than any other time in history. But it is going to get far worse. You see, these saints were so amazed at God’s grace and so passionate about his glory that they were willing to die for their faith. Would that we all be so committed. Beloved, the price of discipleship will doubtless increase in days of persecution that are coming, but its infinite blessings will never be diminished. This is the price of discipleship.

Secondly, we learn of *the prayer of the martyred*. Notice verse 10. “And they cried out with a loud voice.”³² In the original language this is a reference to a passionate, fervent, urgent appeal. And it is also important to understand that the verb tense here indicates a single, definite appeal, not one that is ongoing. “They cried out with a loud voice saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’”³³

Now, this is not trying to tell God what he needs to do as if they need to arouse the almighty from some kind of perceived indifference or lethargy. Nor is this a plea for personal revenge, but rather this is a cry to see the wicked punished so that Christ can reign upon the earth in all of his glory. Have we not been called to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”³⁴ You see, this is like the prayers of imprecation that we read about in the Psalms where David calls upon God to enact his judgment and to deliver his people from wicked oppression. You see, the motivation here is the glory of God, not the glory of self.

Now, imagine the scene. These martyred saints have seen wickedness far beyond anything that any of us could have ever imagined. Likewise now they are in the presence of God’s glory and they have seen, therefore, the glory of God in ways beyond any of us would even imagine. So they have witnessed these extremes, and it would appear that it is as if they could no longer contain themselves, so they cry out with a spontaneous cry of worship and with one accord they humbly yet passionately ask, “Lord, how long? How long?” That was the familiar cry of Israel that we read all through the Old Testament. It

³⁰ Luke 9:23-24.

³¹ Matthew 24:9.

³² Revelation 6:10.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Matthew 6:10.

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is found repeatedly throughout the millennia of their suffering. We see it, for example in Psalm 13 and verse one used four times.

How long, O LORD? Wilt Thou forget me forever? How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will my enemy be exalted over me?³⁵

And yet the glorious response is found in verse five of that psalm, where the psalmist says, “But I have trusted in Thy lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.”³⁶

So, again, these martyred saints cry out, “How long, oh Lord?” *despotes* (des-pot'-ace). This refers to master, ruler, the one who reigns in unrivaled majesty and glory and dominion and authority. “How long, O Lord, holy and true.”³⁷ The one who is holy, the one who is completely and utterly transcendent and the one who is completely and utterly, therefore, separated from sin. But not only a God who is holy, but is also true, the one who is, therefore faithful to his covenant promises, faithful to his Word. It is as if they are saying, “Because you are both holy and true you cannot overlook evil. Your justice must be satisfied. You must avenge.” “How long, O Lord, holy and true,”³⁸ they say, “wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”³⁹

Now, some will say, “Well, I thought we are supposed to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us? Isn't that what Stephen did when he was being stoned?” Is that not what the Lord did when he hung upon the cross? Well, indeed, that is true in our age of grace. But here we witness a throne of *judgment*, not a throne of *grace*. Prayers of mercy are fitting when grace is still available, when grace is still offered, but here the day of grace is about to yield to a day of justice. And in that day prayers for holy retribution will be appropriate. Yet not even then would it be fitting for saints to pray for personal revenge; that would be sin if they were to do that and there is no sin in heaven. But it is appropriate to pray that God would eliminate sin and sinners so that righteousness would prevail.

So we have seen the price of discipleship and the prayer of the martyred. Finally, we see *the promise of the Lord*. Now, again, since this is only the beginning of birth pains, the end of judgment is still a ways off, but it is coming as surely as the sun rises in the east. So here we see the settled purposes of the almighty sovereign answer his beloved redeemed in a most fascinating way. Notice verse 11. “And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer.”⁴⁰

³⁵ Psalm 13:1-2.

³⁶ Psalm 13:5.

³⁷ Revelation 6:10.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Revelation 6:11.

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First, I find it fascinating that here we see that there is some measure of tangibility even with a man's soul apart from his resurrected body. We see the same thing in the remarkable story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16. There, as with the souls of the martyrs here in Revelation six, we learn that they can see, that they hear, they speak, they are at rest, and they even have some measure of concern and knowledge about what is happening on the earth.

While the garments the Lord gives these souls may be literal or purely anthropomorphic, we must not miss the main purpose of this text which is to emphasize God's tender love and grace towards his own as well as his resolute determination to avenge their blood and glorify himself. The "white robe" is always symbolic of the gift of grace, holiness and eternal glory. And notice he gives them each a "white robe." In the original language it is a reference to a long robe that descends all the way to the feet. And, again, this is emblematic of the blessedness and beauty of righteousness that now fully covers the redeemed.

And notice, then, what he says in verse 11. "And they were told that they should rest for a little while longer."⁴¹ These are words of comfort. These are words of confirmation, not of rebuke for impatience or for distrust. Again, that would be sin, an evil that no longer exists in the presence of God. But here the Father calmly invites them to continue to rest in the ineffable joys of heaven for a little while longer. It's as if he is saying to them, "Your passionate desire to see an end to Satan and sin is acceptable worship and I glory in it. The period of vengeance upon the wicked and grace for my elect will soon be finished. So relax."

And notice the criteria here for the final end. He says, "Until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also."⁴² Where we read "fellow servants and their brethren,"⁴³ could be translated, "fellow servants, *even* their brethren." I believe that is the better translation. Their fellow slaves here (the fellow servants) is further identified therefore by their brothers. So the phrase, "Who were about to be killed" modifies both "fellow servants" and their "brothers" making them one and the same group. So here we see that God has a predetermined number of those who will die for the testimony of his Word and for the Lordship of Christ.

What an amazing thought. The time remaining to be completed will be the last half of the tribulation. And, until then, he tells these dear saints to relax in the bliss of heaven for a little while longer. As I think about this I am comforted with the reality that we serve a sovereign God that has ordained the end from the beginning. His timing is always perfect. His sovereign purposes are irresistible. And what bitter sweet joy we have knowing that one day God will avenge the blood of the martyrs and that he will judge all those who refuse to worship him.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

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Now, once again, dear friends, it is exceedingly offensive to speak of these things in our culture, to speak of a coming day of divine vengeance to a world that knows nothing of the holiness of God; that understands nothing about violating his law. Research indicates that most Christians do not even believe in the Second Coming of Christ. Most Christians—and I use the term loosely because I believe most of these people are not saved—most of these people do not even believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In fact, Jesus tells us in Matthew seven that most, “Christians” are not even Christians.

So it boils down to the issue of spiritual authority. This will not be offensive to those who believe that this is the inspired, infallible word of the living God. But if your authority is something otherwise, then naturally, it will be offensive. But if the Bible is the Word of God as it claims to be, then I stand before you with great confidence as a minister of the gospel and tell you that a day of vengeance is coming. This is the repeated promise of Scripture. This is the promise that the converted rabbi, the apostle Paul warned the philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens, Acts chapter 17 and verse 30. He said, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance,”⁴⁴ referring to the fact that God has withheld his judgment for a predetermined period of time.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.⁴⁵

This is my plea to each of you. As Jesus spoke so clearly in the first words of his public ministry that we read of in Matthew chapter four verse 17, he said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”⁴⁶

I close this morning by quoting David Larsen. Some of you will remember when he was here speaking at our church, a great scholar, a great theologian. And I quote from his great work, *Jews, Gentiles and the Church*. Here is what he had to say, quote, “A final duty is incumbent on believers everywhere. In the light of Christ’s commands to live in constant readiness for his return and in view of the constellation of signs of the approaching end of the age, particularly in relation to Israel, we need a strong and growing sense of spiritual urgency in the mission and ministry our Lord has entrusted to us.”

He went on to say, “Although warned, American forces were unready when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Many Christians today live unprepared lives. A zeal and witness, holiness in life, living on the tip toes of eagerness characterized the early believers. We are to be a, quote, ‘Maranatha people who exude hope.’ The Lord is coming.”

⁴⁴ Acts 17:30.

⁴⁵ Acts 17:30-31.

⁴⁶ Matthew 4:17.

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And then he closes with this. “His coming is imminent and we must assist others in boarding the ark of safety before the deluge of judgment falls. The promise stands.” Then he quotes Psalm 132:11. “The Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke.”⁴⁷ And here it is, “One of your descendants I will place on your throne.”⁴⁸ Then David Larsen closes by simply saying in capital letters, “THE KING IS COMING.”

Oh, dear Christian friend, may we all come to the end of our appointed days here on this earth and be able to say with the apostle Paul as he said just prior to his martyrdom in 2 Timothy chapter four and verse seven:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.⁴⁹

Let’s pray together.

Father, we don’t know what we would do without your Word. It, indeed, is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And while we may never know fully all that you have given us in your prophetic Word, we understand this: That you are a holy God and that one day justice and righteousness will prevail. Lord, I pray that each of us who know and love you because of your grace will be vigilant in our efforts to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth. Lord, may we have an ardent zeal for evangelism. Lord, may you cause us all to have such a deep burden in our hearts for our family members and for our friends that we constantly warn them that they must be saved.

Lord, thank you that you are a sovereign God and thank you for the hope of glory that you have given to each of us who know and love you. We pray all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

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⁴⁷ See Psalm 132:11.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 2 Timothy 4:8-9.