

## **The Sixth Seal**

Revelation 6:12-17

It is my great joy and privilege to once again minister the Word of God to you this morning. And I would invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter six.

And as we continue to make our way through this amazing book that reveals to us the judgments that will come upon the earth before our Lord's return, I would just encourage you to keep an attitude of excitement, not one of doom and gloom, because I believe with all my heart that the Church will be lifted up away from all of this and in contrast with the darkness of the wrath of God that is poured out upon the world we can rejoice in the light of his grace that has redeemed us.

So we come this morning to Revelation six beginning verse 12 through verse 17. Follow along as I read.

And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to 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?"<sup>1</sup>

As John saw the unveiling of this awe inspiring event of the sixth seal he must have been shaken to the core. We now begin to see the frequency and intensity of the birth pains beginning to occur as judgment increases upon those who will endure the wrath of God during the time of the tribulation. This is a terrifying scene that is set before us. It is one that will leave no doubt that God is the source of these unimaginable and unprecedented judgments that will fall upon the earth.

Now up until this time, may I remind you, that people will still refuse to take God seriously. They will not see his hand in these judgments. And, of course, this is always a mark of human depravity. This has always been true. It is true to this very day. If you think back even in redemptive history as we look at the Word of God you will recall that Noah preached for 120 years warning the people that they must repent or judgment was going to come. For 120 years they scoffed at him until the rains came and the floods encompassed the earth.

Moses warned Pharaoh repeatedly of God's judgment and Pharaoh scoffed until he was destroyed. The prophets of Israel pleaded with the people on many occasions to repent,

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 6:12-17.

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warning them of impending judgment and they scoffed. They scoffed until the invading hordes came in and took them away.

But in every age, just prior to judgment God speaks through his servants and warns men of that which is about to come, warns men of the judgment that is going to be poured out on the ungodly. But it is interesting that in every age the response is always the same. People scoff at God and they mock his servants, his spokesmen. Moreover, in every age we can see that Satan raises up his own counterfeit preachers to deceive the world with a message that is antithetical to the warnings of Jehovah. This, of course, is the message that the world wants to hear. And, entrepreneurial, ear tickling preachers quickly rise to meet the consumer's demands and preach a sermon of serenity that will somehow sooth everyone's guilty conscience and exalt this phony God that has been created especially in our day.

For 40 years Jeremiah had a message to Judah telling them of the impending judgment because of their flagrant idolatry and other forms of sin and they categorically dismissed him. They preferred, instead, the more pleasing message of their own greedy priests and prophets rather than hearing Jeremiah. Therefore God spoke through Jeremiah in Jeremiah six beginning in verse 13 saying:

For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely. And they have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, the prophets told them what they wanted to hear, that things are going to get better. Change is in the air. Things are not going to get worse. They are going to get better. Calamity will not come upon you. You are not nearly as bad as some people want you to think you are. You are not nearly as sinful as some Christians would tell you deserving of divine wrath. So reject these purveyors of divine vengeance. Because Jeremiah spoke the truth they threatened his life. They put him in stocks. They publicly humiliated him, calling him a false prophet. They even ended up throwing him in a pit. And if that were legal today, the same thing would happen to me and many other preachers who warn people of the truth, the coming judgment. Well, judgment came just as he warned. The Babylonians came and invaded the people and utterly destroyed them.

Today the message is the same. Repent. Judgment is coming, and the response is also the same. People are offended. They don't want to hear it. Jesus predicted this in Matthew 24 verse nine. He said, "You will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away..."<sup>3</sup> which literally means "be offended." "Many will [be offended] and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 6:13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 24:9-10.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 24:10-11.

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We already see the beginnings of this. All you have to do is turn on your television and you will hear it. In 2 Timothy four the apostle Paul warned young Timothy, “Make sure you preach the Word, whether people want to hear it or not. Preach the Word.”<sup>5</sup>

Then he said in verse three:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Spirit also predicted this would occur just before the Lord returns. Speaking through the apostle Peter in 2 Peter three verse four he tells us that they will say, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, they will deny the cataclysmic judgments that have occurred in the past thinking that since they never happened before why do you think they are going to happen now? And all you have to do is look around at our colleges and universities today. You will quickly learn that they think the flood never happened. They think Sodom and Gomorrha never happened. They think that the plagues of Pharaoh never happened and on and on it goes.

Jesus also warned in Matthew 24 verse 37, “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.”<sup>8</sup> In other words life just went on as usual. Until, the Lord says, “the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.”<sup>9</sup>

Sadly today the God of the Bible is dismissed as some mythical deity of ancient fools, some deity for modern morons. People are obsessed with entertainment and pleasure. It reminds me much of the frog and the kettle analogy. They will enjoy the waters of deception until they are finally destroyed by the heat of divine wrath.

Dear friends, please hear the Scriptures. God has promised a day of vengeance. His holiness demands it. His justice must and will prevail, and here in verses 16 and 17 the sixth seal is described as “the wrath of the Lamb...the great day of their wrath,”<sup>10</sup> referring to the triune godhead.

This will be a time of unprecedented judgment upon the earth just prior to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the establishment of his kingdom upon the earth.

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<sup>5</sup> See 2 Timothy 4:2.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Timothy 4:3-4.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Peter 3:4.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 24:37-38.

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 24:38-39.

<sup>10</sup> Revelation 6:16-17.

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The prophets call this period of time *the day of the Lord*. It is a term that appears 19 times in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament. This was a phrase used to describe a period of time in which God would personally intervene in human history either directly or indirectly to accomplish his purposes. And it would also appear that this period of unparalleled judgment paralleled the Jewish solar day which began at sunset and extended through to the next sunset. Therefore a period of darkness always precedes a period of bright light.

Well, similarly, the day of the Lord follows this same sequence. It will begin with a period of darkness and gloom before the light of the Messiah breaks upon the scene in all of his glory. The day of the Lord is described in Isaiah chapter 60 beginning in verse two. Here we understand how the darkness will precede the light of a glorified Zion.

There Isaiah says:

For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples;  
But the LORD will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you.  
And nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.<sup>11</sup>

Amos also warned in chapter five and verse 18, that that day “will be darkness and not light,”<sup>12</sup> referring to the day of the Lord.

Zephaniah also stated:

Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness.<sup>13</sup> Zephaniah one verses 14 and 15.

In the Old Testament *the day of the Lord* would sometimes refer to some imminent historical judgment upon Israel or Judah that would include preliminary judgments that provide a preview of the final eschatological *day of the Lord* that we are looking at here today.

For example, in Joel chapter one beginning in verse four through verse 12 there is a depiction of an actual locust plague that came upon the people. And that was merely a harbinger of further more serious judgment to come, that of the Babylonian hordes that would swoop down upon them and devour them. That is described later in Joel chapter two verses one through 17.

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 60:2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Amos 5:18.

<sup>13</sup> Zephaniah 1:14-15.

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And that Babylonian judgment was also a harbinger of the final *day of the Lord* just before the Lord's return.

In similar fashion Ezekiel warned Judah of *the day of the Lord* that was going to come upon them that would eventually bring total ruin and devastation to the people. However, the Lord's judgment began with two preliminary judgments, two different deportations of the people, the first one in 605 BC and the second one in 597 BC, both of which were previews of the final destruction and deportation that occurred in 586 BC.

And yet, again, as we now examine the final *day of the Lord* here in Revelation we see preliminary judgments in the first five seals, the beginning of the birth pains, each being harbingers of the more severe final judgment that will come.

Now, with the opening of the sixth seal, *the day of the Lord* begins to explode in all of its fury and I want you to keep in mind that the final eschatological *day of the Lord* begins with the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, that great tribulation period of Israel's misery and of judgment upon the earth and those who dwell upon the earth who continue to live in rebellion against God. And it will continue through the battle of Armageddon which seems to complete a first stage. But then it will continue through the millennium and the related events therein as God judges the unrighteous during that rule. And it will finally culminate in the eternal state.

But we should not forget that this is not only a period of judgment, and here is the bright spot in all of this darkness and gloom, but this will also be a time where God intervenes in human history to bring about a national conversion of ethnic Israel and finally restore them to the land that they were promised. In Isaiah chapter two and verse 17 Isaiah tells us the magnificent result of this awesome period of divine wrath and reconciliation. Here is what he says. "The pride of man will be humbled and the loftiness of men will be abased; And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day."<sup>14</sup> My, won't that be wonderful when the Lord alone is exalted rather than ridiculed and scoffed at and rejected.

The closing verses of Malachi's prophecy in Malachi four summarize all of these various components of *the day of the Lord* as he foretells the ominous anticipation of "that great and dreadful day of the Lord" as he calls it.

Here is what Malachi says in Malachi chapter four, a very short chapter.

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." But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Isaiah 2:17.

<sup>15</sup> Malachi 4:1-2.

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There, by the way, the word “sun” is S-U-N, again, referring to the dawning, the brightness of the day that will come, a reference to the Messiah. “The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.”<sup>16</sup> You let a little calf out from his stall and you will see it skip around in exuberance. So this is depicting the sheer joy of millennial blessing.

Malachi goes on to say:

"You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.<sup>17</sup>

There is a reference to an Elijah-like preacher that will rise up and preach the truth just before the Lord returns. We saw an Elijah-like preacher at the Lord’s first coming. That was John the Baptist. This will happen once again. An Elijah-like preacher will come and preach reconciliation just prior to the Lord’s second coming. And then, finally, Malachi says, “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”<sup>18</sup> What a glorious time of uniting this will be, a uniting that has not occurred, one that certainly did not occur at the Lord’s first coming. So the force of the warnings of the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi, really parallels the same types of judgment and repentance that are depicted in the last book of the Bible, the New Testament book of Revelation.

Now with this background, let’s examine the opening of the sixth seal which, I might add, is very much like the first five seals that preceded it in that here we have the unleashing of a *force*, a force of divine judgment from the throne of God. In this case it is the force of fear. And as we examine the text this morning I want to have you notice three things: *the cause of fear, the compass of fear and the consequence of fear.*

Now, by way of chronology, the midpoint of the tribulation will have already passed by this time, events that will be described later in the chronology of Revelation. By now the antichrist that has deceived Israel and, frankly, deceived the world, will have desecrated the temple and demanded that the world worship him. He will have along with him his false prophet who will be his chief worship leader and, of course, this kind of worship, unfortunately, seems to be the narcissistic desire of most politicians and world leaders that we see today.

By now the Jews are fleeing for their lives along with many other believers both Jew and

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<sup>16</sup> Malachi 4:2.

<sup>17</sup> Malachi 4:3-5.

<sup>18</sup> Malachi 4:6.

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Gentile. And while most of the world have refused to acknowledge God as the source of the calamities that have fallen upon them in the first five seals, by the time the sixth seal comes God has their undivided attention. So now the final three and a half years of tribulation are set into motion beginning with the unleashing of the force of fear in the sixth seal. And this also includes six phenomena in the sky as well as on earth that will strike terror in the hearts of those who dwell upon the earth.

First of all, *the cause of fear* in verse 12. “And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood.”<sup>19</sup>

Now, first, might I say that I am convinced that we must take these seals literally, not figuratively as some do. This is not describing the convulsion of the nations or the people on the earth as some would argue. Those are described in literal terms in verses 15 through 17. And we see the same distinction between the physical upheavals in the cosmos and the convulsions of the people on the earth made in the Old Testament parallel of this account in Haggai chapter two verses 21 through 22. So I cannot believe that this description in this seal would address the same thing twice.

Moreover, I would argue that Jesus described these same events in his Olivet Discourse and he did so in the clearest of language with no hint of symbolism that would lead to some figurative interpretation. Furthermore, I hardly think that men will cry out for the mountains and the rocks to fall upon them and to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb simply because of chaos among the nations and the people of the world. We have a lot of that going on today and people do not do that.

Now we must, however, leave room for hyperbole. Certainly that is involved here otherwise life would cease to exist if we held to some stark literalness where these things would actually happen in a completely, totally literal way. So we have to take hyperbole into consideration. However, notwithstanding the semi-poetic nature of the language, the sixth seal describes unimaginable and terrifying cataclysms that are unprecedented in human history. And, again, bear in mind, these are preliminary events that foreshadow the final catastrophes that are predicted at the conclusion of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week at the end of the tribulation before the Lord comes to earth.

So let’s look at this first phenomenon that is a cause of fear at the end of verse 12. “And there was a great earthquake,”<sup>20</sup> *seismos megas* (sice-mos’ meg’-as) in Greek. And it really can be translated “a great shaking.”

You must understand that what is depicted here is far more than just the earth shaking, but this includes the heavens as well. Joel speaks of this in chapter two verses one and two. He says, “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick

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<sup>19</sup> Revelation 6:12.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

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darkness.”<sup>21</sup> There has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it and in verse 10 he says, “the earth quakes and the heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.”<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps you have been in an earthquake. I have been in three of them all in California and it is a terrifying situation to be in. But can you imagine if along with the earth, somehow you sensed the whole atmosphere and the stars and the sun trembling as well. It is incomprehensible.

Notice the second and the third cataclysmic phenomena in verse 12 at the end. He says, “And the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair.”<sup>23</sup> Now imagine, dear friends that even during the middle of the day everything goes dark, that there is some kind of an eerie darkness, a darkness that speaks of the judgment of God that now envelopes the earth.

John goes on to say, “And the whole moon became like blood.”<sup>24</sup> Now, we can only speculate as to what is really occurring here, but undoubtedly the massive shaking of the earth will unleash volcanic activity around the globe, spewing ash high into the atmosphere and blocking out the rays of the sun. Other prophets speak of this as well.

For example, Isaiah chapter 13:10 we read, “The sun will be dark when it rises, And the moon will not shed its light.”<sup>25</sup> In Joel chapter two verse 30 and 31 says:

And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.<sup>26</sup>

And even our Lord in his Olivet Discourse and in Luke chapter 21 verse 11 says this. “There will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.”<sup>27</sup> And then later in verses 25 and 26 he went on to say:

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Joel 2:1-2.

<sup>22</sup> See Joel 2:10.

<sup>23</sup> Revelation 6:12.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah 13:10.

<sup>26</sup> Joel 2:30.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 21:11

<sup>28</sup> Luke 12:25-26.

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Dr. Henry Morris, a Christian scientist and theologian offers us some excellent insight on this astounding spectacle and he says this, quote, “The great earthquake described here is one that for the first time in history is world wide in scope. Seismologists and geophysicists in recent years have learned a great deal about the structure of the earth and about the cause and nature of earthquakes. The earth’s solid crust is traversed with a complex network of faults with all resting upon a plastic mantle whose structure is still largely unknown, whether the crust consists of great moving plates is a current matter of controversy among geophysicists. So the ultimate cause of earthquakes is still not known. In all likelihood the entire complex of crustal instabilities is a remnant of the phenomena of the great flood, especially the break up of the fountains of the great deep.”

“In any case the vast worldwide network of unstable earthquake belts around the world suddenly will begin to slip and fracture on a global basis and a gigantic earthquake will ensue. This is evidentially and naturally accompanied by tremendous volcanic eruptions spewing vast quantities of dust and steam and gasses into the upper atmosphere.”

“It is probably these that will cause the sun to be darkened and the moon to appear blood red,” end quote.

Then John continues his inspired description with a fourth terrifying phenomenon in verse 13. “And the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.”<sup>29</sup> The term “stars” *asteres* (as’-tare-es) is a broad term that can refer to large bodies such as the sun as well as the moon, but it can also refer to smaller objects that can exist in space, things like asteroids and comets and meteors. And since the actual stars and the sun are not smitten until the fourth trumpet judgment in chapter eight verse 12, and since actual stars are far too large to hit the earth without completely destroying it, it would seem best to interpret the *asteres* (as’-tare-es) here in the sixth seal as that of asteroids and meteor showers that will strike the earth. This also explains the Lord’s description in Luke chapter 21 and verse 25 where he tells us that the people be dismayed and perplexed by, quote, “the roaring of the sea and the waves,”<sup>30</sup> end quote.

Now, you think about it. The earth is being shaken violently. Asteroids and meteors are striking the earth, especially the ocean. The result would be massive tsunamis that would wreak unimaginable havoc on the coastlines of every continent. This is a frightening, terrifying scene. These massive rocks will fall from the sky, he tells us, “as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.”<sup>31</sup>

I was curious about the word “unripe.” I don’t know anything about figs. Or I should say I didn’t until the last couple of weeks. I did a lot of research on the fig trees and it is interesting. I found that ripened figs are rather soft and they droop and they will come off fairly easily, but an unripe fig is as hard as a rock and it would require an enormous violent wind to even begin to cause it to be removed from a branch. So that is the description that John uses.

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<sup>29</sup> Revelation 6:13.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 21:25.

<sup>31</sup> Revelation 6:13.

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And we have a fifth earth shattering phenomena of this seal in verse 14. “And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up.”<sup>32</sup> Now, here, again, stark literalness must be avoided. Instead it would appear that John is trying to wrap language around a cosmic disturbance that is completely indescribable. He is seeing something that he has never seen before and he is trying to find words to help us understand what he sees. So he says, “The sky was split apart.”<sup>33</sup> It is as if he is saying, “it looks like a scroll when it is rolled up.”

In Isaiah chapter 34 and verse four God speaks through his prophet and says, “And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.”<sup>34</sup>

There is some indication here that whatever God does with the heavens above it seems to have a dramatic impact even upon Satan and his demonic hosts, not to mention transform the atmosphere as we know it and as we are accustomed to. However, I want you to be careful here. This is not a reference to the final uncreation and dissolution of the universe that is described later on in Revelation chapter 21 and verse one as well as in 2 Peter chapter three and verse 10. That will happen at the end of the millennial age with the new heavens and the new earth that will replace it.

And we see a sixth and final horrific phenomena here in verse 14. He says, “And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”<sup>35</sup> Now notice he says, “moved out of their places.”<sup>36</sup> In other words they are shifted. They are altered. They are not *eliminated* all together. After all, some mountains must remain in order for men to hide in and to call upon rocks to fall upon them and so forth. In fact, it is not until the seventh bowl judgment that we see the removal, literally the flattening of all of the mountains. Chapter 16 verse 20 of Revelation we read, “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.”<sup>37</sup>

So, given the cataclysmic upheavals upon the earth at this point, it would be expected that the mountains and the islands would all be shifting. Things are a bit out of place. And, again, think of this. The earth has been shaken. Volcanoes have erupted. The earth has been struck repeatedly with untold numbers of asteroids and meteors and the oceans have displaced whole islands. The whole surface of the earth’s crust has shifted. And as I meditate upon this I think, my, at that point everybody will know that God has spoken. Those upon the earth will be horrified beyond description.

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<sup>32</sup> Revelation 6:14.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah 34:4.

<sup>35</sup> Revelation 6:14.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Revelation 16:20

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As I thought about this my heart reflected upon the fact that for years Christians have been offended by the world's refusal to acknowledge God as Creator. Even to this day our school systems insist on teaching our children the God-mocking theory of evolution that would have our children and all of us believe that God was not the Creator, but that we are merely the result of some cosmic disturbance. We are nothing more than sophisticated germs. They even attribute the phenomena of nature to some mythical goddess that we call "Mother Nature." And today we even celebrate "Earth Day" as we did this last week, every April 22, marking the birth of the modern environmental movement that supposedly began in 1970; fueled by activists that deny God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. That somehow we have got to do all of these things to keep our planet together because ultimately we are the ones in power, not a Creator God. And tragically, dear friends, the sixth seal will horrify all of those who subscribe to those blasphemies. This will be their worst nightmare.

Yet, by God's grace we know that some will repent and be saved. What a marvelous thought. So on the heels of Joel's prophecy concerning these events we see God's mercy, because there he adds in chapter two and verse 32, "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Will be delivered."<sup>38</sup> Isn't that a precious statement? "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be delivered." He goes on to say, "For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape, As the LORD has said, Even among the survivors whom the LORD calls."<sup>39</sup>

Oh, dear friends, what a merciful God we serve. Even in the day of his wrath he extends his hand of mercy and grace and pleads with sinners to repent. These disasters will cause the fear. But remember that ultimately the cause of all of this is sin. That is why the writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 26:

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.<sup>40</sup>

And then in verse 31 we read, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>41</sup>

So we have seen *the cause of fear*. *The compass of fear* is second here, the scope, the extent of the fear. Now think about this before we look at the text. Normally great disasters primarily affect the poor and the weak. Somehow the wealthy and the noble and the mighty always have some fortress of safety to which they can escape. But such a place is nowhere to be found in the sixth seal. The only ones not suicidal with fear will be those who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Lamb of God and have

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<sup>38</sup> Joel 2:32.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hebrews 10:26-27.

<sup>41</sup> Hebrews 10:31.

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been reconciled to him. They will be the ones who understand that Jesus was their propitiation, Jesus was the one who satisfied or appeased or placated the wrath of God. That is why in 1 John 4:10 John tells us, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”<sup>42</sup> So, in other words, those who have trusted in Christ to be the satisfaction of divine wrath will not experience that wrath. So *the compass of this fear* will include all unbelievers.

Notice in verse 15, “And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man...”<sup>43</sup> That covers it all, doesn’t it? My friends, the ground is level at the foot of the throne of divine judgment and every man is guilty, regardless of his status, regardless of his rank. Every man will be punished accordingly. And, likewise, I might add that the ground is level at the foot of the cross. No one is higher, no one is lower than anyone else. The only thing any of us contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary.

And, finally, we see *the consequence of fear*. You would think at this point the consequence would be repentance, brokenness, humility, pleading for divine mercy, a confession of sin and a crying out to God. That is not what we see. In verse 15 we see that some hide from God. The text says, “[they] hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.”<sup>44</sup>

What a picture of man’s pride and rebellion and, frankly, spiritual stupidity. How foolish to think that you can hide from God, how foolish to think that somehow you can escape his watchful eye and avoid his judgment. Moreover, given the disasters that will be occurring on the earth, at this time there is really no safe place of refuge. They only ones who will find solace during this time will be the ones who have found their refuge in Christ alone.

Psalm 139 verse seven says, “Where can I go from Your Spirit?”<sup>45</sup> This is David speaking. He understood this.

Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in Sheol [or, in other words, in the grave], behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the dawn, If I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, Even there Your hand will lead me, And Your right hand will lay hold of me.<sup>46</sup>

But as we read, certainly some will hide, but others will seek a different form of protection. They will seek death. It is amazing to watch the ravages of sin upon a man’s heart, how man seeks relief over blessing, how man will do anything to escape rather

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<sup>42</sup> 1 John 4:10.

<sup>43</sup> Revelation 6:15.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Psalm 139:7.

<sup>46</sup> Psalm 139:7-9.

## The Sixth Seal

Revelation 6:12-17

than repent. Those that don't die from sheer panic will become suicidal as we see in verses 16 and 17. There we read:

And they said to the mountains and to 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?"<sup>47</sup>

You see, again, by now, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that this is the judgment of the God of the Bible. Now, you might ask, "Well, how would they know that it is the wrath of the Lamb? That is very biblical terminology. How would the world understand that?" The answer is easy. They will understand it because of the testimony of the martyrs who have died by the millions by this time that we read about in the fifth seal.

Once again, how foolish to assume that death will provide a way of escaping divine judgment, as if you can just kind of not show up for the trial and then you are ok. Or you can just cease to exist. "If I just die then I won't have to face any of this." Friends, you must understand that no sin will go unpunished because God is a holy God. In Hebrews 9:27 we read that, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment."<sup>48</sup>

And, of course, they will ask, as John tells us, "Who is able to stand?"<sup>49</sup> Of course, the answer is, "No one." No one apart from pleading the blood of Christ; only those who avail themselves of God's grace will be able to stand. In fact, we are told that they will be able to stand in the presence of his glory, what, blameless with great joy,<sup>50</sup> but not so those who reject Christ.

So here we see the consequence of the sixth seal. It is sheer terror. Some will hide. Others will commit suicide. Those will be the two options, anything rather than repent and be saved. And, again, people will say, "My, my, my, this is so hard to imagine. If all of these things are true, certainly everyone at this point would confess Christ as Savior, to be freed from all of this. How could anyone be so hardened to the truth?"

Well, the answer is found in Scripture. And you must understand this: sinners who have habitually hardened their hearts against God will be subject to the wrath of divine abandonment whereby God will judicially harden their hearts even more so and permanently so. Paul addressed this in 2 Thessalonians two where he describes the mystery of lawlessness when "that lawless one will be revealed,"<sup>51</sup> referring to the antichrist during this time.

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<sup>47</sup> Revelation 6:16-17.

<sup>48</sup> Hebrews 9:27.

<sup>49</sup> Revelation 6:17.

<sup>50</sup> See Jude 24.

<sup>51</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:8.

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And during this time he talks about the judicial hardening of unbelievers in verse 11 and 12, a hardening that will far surpass anything that we witness even today. And here is what he says, 2 Thessalonians 2:11:

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.<sup>52</sup>

Oh, child of God, I read that passage and I think, there I am. There you are, were it not for God's grace. I did not believe the truth and I took pleasure in wickedness. But to think that God in his infinite love and his glorious grace would reach down and breath life into this spiritual corpse and cause me to be born again and cause you to be born again. Think of it. Because of this, dear friends, we will never need to find protection in some cave because God is our rock and our fortress. We will never need to cry out for the rocks and the mountains to hide us from his face because it is his face that we seek every day.

When I was meditating upon this I was thinking how wonderful it is to know that God in his grace has transformed us and transferred us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. How wonderful it is to know that we are not looking for a day of wrath, but a day of glory, how wonderful to know that we are not anticipating the antichrist, we are looking for Christ our Savior. And while in the vault of my study as I was contemplating these profound truths, an old hymn came to mind, as often it does and as often it should in each of us, for that is the purpose of great hymnody. A hymn that we used to sing when I was a little boy and I am sure you remember it, an old Fanny Crosby hymn, that blind hymn writer of days gone by. And, in particular came to my mind the fourth verse and the chorus. Here is how the verse goes.

When clothed in His brightness, transported I rise  
To meet Him in clouds of the sky,  
His perfect salvation, His wonderful love,  
I'll shout with the millions on high.

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock  
That shadows a dry, thirsty land;  
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,  
And covers me there with His hand,  
And covers me covers me there with His hand.

Oh, dear friends, I hope that you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. I hope you know and love my Savior. And, if not, won't you call upon him today before it is too late. Ask him to forgive you of your sins and seek him while he still may be found.

And for those of us who know and love Christ, dear friends, won't you abandon the fleeting pleasures of this world and commit yourself afresh to being busy about the

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<sup>52</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.

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Lord's work... Do you know what your gifts are? Are you developing them? Are you using them for his glory? Do you not know that he is coming and he could come soon? Will you not be vigilant?

How often I see Christians that seem to be more excited about a football game or about their kids playing sports or about some new television show that they would never miss or about some other attraction that is eternally insignificant while people all around are dying in their sins. Where are we when it comes time to pray? Where are we when it comes time to worship? Are we immersing ourselves in the Word of God and allowing it to transform our hearts? Do we not believe that these things are true and that the Lord is coming? If so, we need to live consistently with these truths. And I humbly and yet boldly call you to this end.

Dear friends, a day of vengeance is coming and people that we know and love are going to be caught up in it and they will perish in their sins. I hope that strikes you to the very core and gives us all an ardent zeal for evangelism.

Let's pray together.

*Father, again we thank you for these truths that sober us. We thank you for these truths that remind us that you are a holy God and that even the wrath that comes upon the wicked is one that is deserved, one that is just and, Lord, to think, that that is precisely what we deserved and were it not for your grace we would be recipients of that same wrath.*

*Lord, we praise you and we thank you. Lord, give us a passion to preach the gospel, to serve you in every way we can. May all other things be secondary. May we be those who, indeed, are salt and light in this world. May we be a living sacrifice for you. I pray all of this in the precious name of Jesus and for his sake. Amen.*

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**Transcript Explanation:** Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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