

Martyrs & Rebels • Revelation 6:9-17

INTRO • Read vs. 9-11 • Set Scene

1. Since it's been 3 wks since our last study in Rev., we need to recap.
2. In Ch4, John is called up to heaven in a kind of fore-glimpse of the Rapture.
3. He sees God's throne-room, & all the glory attendant on it.
4. In Ch5, he watches while Jesus takes the title deed to Earth from the Father's hand.
5. Then in Ch6, He breaks the scroll's 7 seals.
 - a. As we saw last time, it's a picture of Jesus **Closing Escrow** on Planet Earth which now, by right of the cross, **legally** belongs to Him.
 - b. But there's a problem The devil & rebel humanity in league w/him are squatters who refuse to yield to Jesus' Mastery of Earth.
 - c. So He **evicts** them!
6. As Jesus breaks **each** of the first 4 seals on Earth's Title Deed, the eviction process gets more intense.
7. Today we look at the 5th & 6th seals.

Vs. 9-11 • 5th Seal

⁹ When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God & for the testimony which they held.

1. The first 4 seals spoke of events that occur on Earth during the Tribulation.
2. With the 5th seal, John's perspective is back in heaven.
3. While he doesn't tell us **which** altar this is, ch8 says it's the altar of incense which represents **prayer**.
4. **Under it** are the souls of those martyred for their faith in Christ.
 - a. Why are they **under** the altar?
 - b. It had to do with **where** the blood of sacrifices was put.
 - 1) In Lev. 17 & Deut. 12, God said the life was in the blood.
 - 2) The priests poured the blood of the sacrifices people brought, at the **base** of the altar.
5. The idea here is that these martyrs **have offered themselves to God**.
 - a. Their physical bodies were killed on Earth,
 - b. But their eternal souls are preserved in Heaven.
6. As we read on we discover these are a **special group** of martyrs.
 - a. They're people who come to Faith in Christ **AFTER** the Rapture.
 - b. They live during the Tribulation, & are put to death FOR THEIR FAITH.
 - c. In Ch13, we learn more about the career of the antichrist & see he's given power to make war w/the saints & kill them.
7. Make no mistake There will be **many** who come to Faith in Christ **after** the Rapture.
 - a. Think of all those **you've witnessed to**; shared your faith with.
 - b. Consider all the **Bibles** left behind.
 - 1) Notes written in the margin - things being jotted down RIGHT NOW!
 - 2) "If you're reading this after the Rapture; it's not too late to put your faith in Jesus."
 - 3) The premise of the *Left Behind* series was people who came to Faith AFTER the Rapture because they realized the stuff they'd laughed at before – WAS ALL TRUE!
 - c. No doubt that's going to happen.
8. In ch7, we learn about an **army of evangelists** God will raise during the Tribulation.
 - a. They'll lead **many thousands**, maybe even **millions** to Faith.
 - b. The problem is, these Tribulation believers will oppose the antichrist's agenda.
 - c. And for that, they'll suffer his & his supporters' wrath.
9. Sitting in the safety of a SoCal church, it may be difficult for some of us to accept the idea that an entire group of people could be singled out for brutality & death just because of what they believe.
 - a. I mean, This is the Modern Age!
 - b. We're hip, sophisticated, civilized people who trust in reason & science.
 - c. We're not savage, superstitious barbarians who kill people just because they don't look & sound like us.
 - d. Humanity has outgrown that!

10. Excuse me: Have you heard the news lately?
 - a. Certainly you've heard of **ISIS**, who just this last week wiped out a couple Christian villages in Northern Iraq and bombed churches Last Sunday on Easter.
 - b. The leaders of Iran **repeatedly call** for the utter annihilation of Israel.
 - c. And speaking of civilized, sophisticated scientific modernity
 - 1) Who was more sophisticated, refined, or given over to science than Germany in the 1930's just before WWII.
 - 2) Yet the Nazi Final Solution saw 6 million people systematically exterminated – all because they were said to be **hindering** the Evolution of the Human Race.
 - 3) That wasn't that long ago; 70 yrs.
11. It's not difficult to imagine a near future when a charismatic leader emerges w/amazing solutions to the world's most perplexing problems.
 - a. The problems that linger will be blamed on Christians, just as the Roman Emperors did.
 - b. In the late 2nd & 3rd Cs, several Emperors laid the blame for the Empire's woes on Believers.
 - c. The charge was that the **traditional Roman gods** were jealous so many Romans neglected them in favor of the new kid on the block – Jesus.
 - d. It wasn't that they worshipped Jesus; it's that they worshipped **ONLY** Him.
 - e. They stopped believing in the other gods altogether; giving homage **only** to Christ.
 - f. For this they were labeled "atheists" & made the scapegoat for every trouble.
 - 1) One historian said when the **rivers flooded**; Christian were blamed.
 - 2) When the **rivers dried up**, Christians were blamed.
 - 3) Then the cry went out, "**Kill the Christians! The atheists to the lions.**"
12. Well, history has a habit of repeating itself.
13. The Antichrist will convince his millions of supporters Christians stand in the way of a new *Golden Age*, and they must be eradicated.
14. In John 16:2 Jesus said, "The day will come when everyone who puts you to death will think he is doing God a favor."
- ¹⁰ And they [the martyrs] cried w/a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy & true, until You judge & avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"
15. The martyrs ask God **when** they'll be avenged.
 - a. They didn't take revenge themselves. They left it in the hands of God.
 - b. But they ask for a hint **WHEN** it will be meted out.
16. Listen: For the Christian, the **sweetest revenge** is to see those who oppose us **become 1 OF US!**
 - a. That's just the best When a **Saul** becomes a **Paul**.
 - b. But if they **won't** come to Faith, they **WILL** know God's justice.
- ¹¹ Then a white robe was given to each of them; & it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants & their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.
17. Note that in v9 John says he saw the **SOULS** of the martyrs.
 - a. The **souls** of believers who die **during the Trib** go to heaven, but they won't get new bodies **till later**.
 - b. The **Rapture** which happens **before** the Trib, will see the rez of all those who've died in Faith throughout history, ...
 - c. Along w/the **instantaneous transformation** of all believers alive when the Rapture happens – just as Paul describes in 1 Thess 4 & 1 Cor. 15.
 - d. But those who come to faith in Jesus **during** the Trib won't get new bodies till the very end of the Trib.
 - e. They're given white robes as a temporary covering.
 - f. In Chs7&9 we learn those white robes speak of the Righteousness of Jesus imputed to us.

Vs. 12-17 • 6th Seal

¹² I looked when He opened the sixth seal, & behold, there was a great earthquake; & the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, & the moon became like blood. ¹³ & the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its

late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, & every mountain & island was moved out of its place.

1. When Jesus breaks the 6th seal **all creation is shaken**.
2. Throughout history, though kingdoms rise & fall, though empires ascend & decline; regimes follow each other in an endless parade of fools –
3. Mankind has always counted on the enduring **sturdiness** of the Planet; the **steadfastness** of the heavens.
 - a. Oh sure There's the occasional earthquake or comet.
 - b. But they pass & life goes on.
4. This is why **real estate, LAND**, always has been the premier investment.
 - a. Precious metals like gold & silver rise & fall.
 - b. All the investment schemes people have come up w/over the years with trillions won & lost.
 - c. The one thing that retains its value = **Land!** // It's the one sure thing.
5. It will be, till Jesus breaks the 6th seal. Then everything changes!
 - a. You see, **THAT'S precisely the message** God wants the world to get during the Tribulation.
 - b. Things are different now. This **isn't like** any other period in history.
 - c. History's wrapping up. These are the last of the Last Days; the end of the End Times.
 - d. The Grand Finale. The Jeopardy song is playin', ya'll.
6. God gives creation a good shake, to wake people up.
7. As I said before and will repeat our later studies –
 - a. What we're seeing in Rev. is God progressively turning up the heat on rebel humanity.
 - b. Judgment comes, & a few come to their senses, repent and come to faith.
 - c. The rest harden. So much so, they persecute and kill those who came to faith.
 - d. Then another round of judgment comes and a few more repent and come to faith.
 - e. The rest harden a little more till **another round of even more severe** judgment comes, producing another crop of converts.
 - f. But by the time we get to the end of that, the judgments are so brutal, it's only hardcore unbelievers & rebels left.
6. The 6th seal is a hard judgment, but it's a measure of God's grace in that humanity is served notice they ought not trust in things not worthy of their trust – like the Earth beneath their feet or the sky above their head.
 - a. There is only ONE worthy of our trust – Jesus! Only Him.
 - b. What are YOU trusting in today?
7. The global & cosmic disturbances John speaks of here were foretold by the OT prophets as signs the day of God's wrath had come.
8. Jesus spoke of this same time in Luke 21:25-26
There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken.
9. In v12 John says there's going to be a **great earthquake**. It's the 1st of 3 during the Trib.
10. He speaks of the stars falling to earth, like over-ripe figs torn loose by a storm.
 - a. When they harvested figs, there were always a few that weren't ripe so were **left** on the tree.
 - b. Rarely did anyone bother to pluck them; so they'd just stay on the tree until they shriveled up.
 - c. They didn't fall till knocked off by a storm.
11. The idea is this: These falling stars are most likely meteors.
 - a. But this isn't a huge meteor shower; they aren't going to come down in a mass.
 - b. Like wind-blown figs, they'll come at random.
 - c. But the point is – they come; regularly – and they do immense damage.
 - d. They throw up enough dust to darken the sky.
12. Because this earthquake coincides w/cosmic events, it's possible John describes a massive meteor strike.
 - a. **Meteor Crater** near Winslow, AZ was caused by a meteor 150 ft. wide, travelling 28,000 mph.
 - 1) It made a crater almost a mile across & 600 ft deep.
 - 2) It kicked up enough debris to filter the light of the sun for weeks.
 - 3) Some researchers think it may have even torqued & tweaked the rotation of the Earth.

- b. On June 30, 1908, a small asteroid or comet **exploded** in the skies over the Tunguska region of Siberia, flattening 830 sq miles of forest, 80 million trees.
 - 1) The shock wave blew people off their feet many miles away.
 - 2) The explosion was measured as a 5.0 quake at seismic stations **thousands** of miles away.
 - 3) Labs as distant as England registered a radical change in **air pressure** right after the event.
 - 4) Since the Tunguska Event happened over such a remote region, there was little damage except to trees.
 - 5) If an event like that happened over a metropolitan area, the damage would be catastrophic.
- c. Many of you saw the video of a **small** meteor that exploded over a city in Russia shattering windows & terrifying people just 2 yrs ago. (Feb, 2013)
13. It's likely the earthquake & cosmic events of these vs are related.
 - a. A meteor strikes & causes an earthquake, which shakes the entire planet.
 - b. As Jesus said in Luke 21, the seas are in turmoil with roaring waves – which is the nightmare scenario if a large hot meteor hits an ocean.
 - c. Think of all the steam created by something like that & the impact that would have on global weather.
 - d. Think of all the sea-life that would perish.
 - e. Which is precisely what some of the later judgments of Rev. are about.
14. So: What do people living at that time do?

¹⁵ & the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave & every free man, hid themselves in the caves & in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ & said to the mountains & rocks, “Fall on us & hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne & from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, & who is able to stand?”
15. Note that! This shaking of physical creation does confront the world w/the existence of God.
 - a. They rightly attribute their distress to God's judgment.
 - b. But instead of repenting, they hide!
 - c. They're like Adam & Eve in Eden after they sinned.
 - 1) They knew God was real, but tried to hide from the One Who sees & knows all.
 - 2) Here's a solid life hint for you: Don't play poker w/see-thru cards.
16. While the judgments of the first 4 seals could be avoided by the rich and powerful, the 6th seal is a great leveler because it effects EVERYONE.
 - a. No one can get away from this one.
 - b. And it's so clear what's happening has its origin in God's sovereign power over creation,
 - c. No one bothers trying to **explain it away**.
 - 1) No one says it's Global Warming; It's not Climate Change;
 - 2) The natural cycle of solar renewal; The spasms of Gaia.
17. Everyone knows God is **stepping into history**. Remember: All this is **Jesus is Closing Escrow**.
18. Have you ever thought, “I wish God would send me a sign He's there.”
 - a. “Just something miraculous to reinforce my faith.”
 - b. “A Vision or Word to affirm He's really there.”
 - c. Almost **everyone** thinks that at some point. Even most atheists. They want **proof / evidence**.
19. Well – the World's going to get all the proof for the existence of God it can take, **& then some**.
 - a. And here's what happens: The vast majority of people STILL rebel, still refuse to trust in Christ!
 - b. That's what we see in these vs.
20. For anyone here who who's stalled in trusting Christ because of a lack of evidence, please understand that's not really the issue.
 - a. Their problem for most people isn't that they CAN'T believe; they don't WANT to.
 - b. Jesus rebuked the people of HIS OWN DAY because they demanded a sign.
 - 1) He'd already given them hundreds; but they wanted another, & another.
 - 2) If you're **not** a Christian, may I suggest you seriously consider just what it would take for you **to** come to Faith in Jesus.
 - 3) Identify what that is, then watch how God works to take care of it.

4) But be careful of the conclusion ***there's nothing*** that would or could lead to your conversion.

5) Because you're one of those who's going to be in a cave one day, hiding from the wrath of God.

The Wrath of the Lamb

1. That's where we end today. Look carefully at what these people ***say***.

"Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne & from the wrath of the Lamb!"

2. ***Lambo!***

3. We laugh because an angry baby sheep just doesn't strike much fear in us.

4. Oh – But ***THIS Lamb*** will!

5. In his vision, John saw Jesus as a sacrificed Lamb take the title dead to Earth & begin breaking its seals.

6. Now the Lamb ***morphs*** into the Lion & they ask a great question ...

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, & who is able to stand?"

7. The answer is, "No one!" So God has provided ***a way of escape*** from His wrath.

8. That way of escape is thru Faith in Christ.

9. 1 Thess. 5:9 says -

God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

10. In Rom. 5 we read -

[Being justified by Jesus], we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

CONCLUSION

1. With the 5th & 6th seals, we see 2 groups of people

a. Martyrs & Rebels.

b. One group is in Heaven under the altar; the other is on Earth, underground.

c. The martyrs ***call for*** God's wrath; The rebels ***hide from*** it.

2. The pioneers who settled the Great Plains, were hardy folk who endured ***a lot of hardship***.

a. One of the things they dreaded most was a prairie fire

b. They moved so fast there was no way to outrun them.

c. The only way to survive was to burn the area where you were so when the fire arrived, there'd be nothing to burn and it would pass over.

3. THAT! Is a perfect picture of God's judgment & our salvation in Christ.

4. One day, the fires of God's righteous judgment will burn up all evil.

a. No one will be able to hide or outrun it.

b. The ***only safe place*** is where God's judgment ***has already been***: The Cross.

c. Those who are in Christ are saved & safe because He bore our guilt.