

(Revelation) Revelation 6:1-17

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on Revelation 6 emphasizes the importance of understanding prophecy in light of God's sovereignty and the call to love over curiosity.

Duration: 1:00:35

Scripture: Zechariah 5:1-4, Acts 1:6-8, Revelation 1:3, Revelation 6:16-17, Revelation 22:14

Topics: "End Time Judgment", "Gods Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the four instruments that God uses as weapons of warfare: sword, famine, disease, and wild beasts. He references Revelation 6:7-8 and Ezekiel 14:12-21 to support his points. The preacher emphasizes that only one-fourth of the earth's population is wiped out by these judgments, showing God's grace. He also highlights the importance of righteousness as a means of protection and mentions biblical figures like Noah, Daniel, and Job as examples to follow. The sermon concludes by mentioning Psalm 91 and the book of Revelation as tools for understanding the future and the coming of Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We are moving into chapter 6 today, and beginning with chapter 6, we see that which we can call the more prophetic part of this book of Revelation. The things which Jesus told John would take place in the future. And when we study prophecy, whatever it is, prophecy that's yet unfulfilled, there is a verse of scripture in 1 Corinthians 13 that we must keep in mind.

I want to turn to that for a moment. 1 Corinthians 13 and verse 12. Paul says here, Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Now I know in part, but then I shall know fully, just as also have been fully known. But now, abide faith, hope, love these three, but the greatest of these is love. Pursue love.

Chapter 14, verse 1. So, there are many things concerning the future which we don't see very clearly. And I think God, in His great wisdom, has allowed a lot of prophecy concerning the future to be seen by us in a mirror dimly. In our flesh, there is a great lust to know these things exactly, mostly to satisfy our curiosity.

Now, the word of God is never given to satisfy our curiosity. And therefore, we don't want to use the word of God to satisfy people's curiosity. There is a verse in the Old Testament, which we have looked at many

times, Deuteronomy 29, verse 29, which says, The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed to us and to our children.

So, there are things which are clearly revealed. We are told, for example, in 2 Peter 1, verse 4, that all things pertaining to life and godliness have been given to us. Concerning the way of salvation, concerning the way we can partake of divine nature and overcome sin, there is no doubt at all.

And those things we don't see through a mirror dimly. We see crystal clearly. But the amazing thing is, among many believers, that those things which are written in a crystal clear way, like Romans 6, 14, sin shall not have dominion over you, they don't take so seriously.

But those things which are as in a mirror dimly, they are very curious to know all the details about. Now, this is very unhealthy, spiritually speaking. We need to have our priorities right.

The greatest is not prophecy, the greatest is love. And we have to pursue, not primarily after understanding of prophecy, but after love. There are other things which we will know clearly when we stand before the Lord face to face.

But since the Lord has given us His word, we believe that He expects us to study it and to understand. Even if it is dimly, something concerning the coming days. So turning back to the book of Revelation, I want to point out another fact that we find in the book of Revelation.

In Revelation chapter 1 verse 8, we read that God is called the Almighty. Revelation 1.8, I am the Alpha and the Omega, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. And at the end of the book, in chapter 21 and verse 22, He is again called the Lord God, the Almighty.

Now, last time I mentioned how at the beginning and the end of the book of Revelation, there are these two verses on obedience. That is in chapter 1 verse 3 and chapter 22 verse 7. But we also notice here in these two verses I just showed you, that at the beginning and the end of the book of Revelation, God is called Almighty. And this becomes all the more significant when we discover that in the entire New Testament, God is called Almighty only ten times.

And out of those ten times, nine times it is in the book of Revelation. Isn't that interesting? That out of ten times that God is called Almighty, nine of those times should be in the book of Revelation. And that at the beginning and at the end of the book, He should be called the Almighty God.

Now, the reason for this is pretty clear, that God wants us to be rooted and grounded in the fact that He is Almighty, all-powerful, in control of everything, and this is the fact that we need to be sure of as we approach the book. I just want to mention in passing, the only other instance in the New Testament where God is called Almighty, it's a very significant occurrence, it's in 2 Corinthians 6 verse 17 and 18, where there is a call to the people of God saying, come out from their midst and be separate. A similar call to what we find in the book of Revelation, Revelation 18 verse 4, come out from Babylon, my people, 2 Corinthians 6 verse 17, and if you come out like that, I will welcome you, says the Lord Almighty.

And so, it is to those who want to come out from that which is unclean, that which is contrary to the word of God, that God reveals Himself as the Almighty God. And it is primarily for such people that the book of Revelation is written. Now, we were considering last week in Revelation 5 and verse 1, that in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, that is, this Almighty God, was a scroll.

Now, when we read the word book, we know that there were no bound books like this in those days. What they had was scrolls, there was a long bit of parchment or some other material like that, and it was rolled up, and it didn't have pages, you had to roll up the left side to read what was coming next, and roll up some more to read what was coming next, and unroll the right side, and that's how the scrolls were, the books of those days. And this scroll, which we saw, concerned the redemption of the human race and the redemption of the earth.

We can also look at another verse in Ezekiel chapter 2, verse 9 and 10, that tells us something more about this scroll, before we look at chapter 6 of Revelation. Ezekiel 2, verse 9 and 10, we read here that Ezekiel also had a similar vision, and I looked, and a hand was extended to me, and lo, a scroll was in it. And when the Lord spread out the scroll before me, it was written on the front and back, that's just like we saw in Revelation, written on the outside and inside, and written on it were lamentations, mourning, and woe.

That's what was written. Written on that scroll were various types of judgments. Another verse, the book of Zechariah chapter 5. It's good for us to look at these references, because Scripture interprets Scripture for us.

Otherwise we get into all types of fanciful interpretations, which may not be true. Zechariah chapter 5, Zechariah also had a similar vision of a scroll. And then I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold, there was a flying scroll.

And he said to me, What do you see? And I answered, I see a flying scroll. Its length is 20 cubits, that's 30 feet. Its width is 10 cubits, that's 15 feet.

And then he said to me, This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole earth. And then two commandments, which men have disobeyed, are mentioned in the rest of that verse. One is the commandment not to steal.

And the other is the commandment is not to take the Lord's name in vain. Everyone who steals will be purged according to the writing on one side of the scroll. And everyone who swears will be purged according to the writing on the other side of the scroll.

There were two sides to the scroll. And we can say that these were judgments that came because man disobeyed basically God's ten commandments. And the two sides of the scroll, we can say that when Moses came down from the mountain, he had two tablets of stone.

On one were written four commandments that related to God. And on the other were written six commandments that related to man's relationship with his neighbor. And here we read, stealing is related to man's relationship with his neighbor.

Swearing, taking the Lord's name in vain, is related to man's relationship with God. So we could consider that the two sides of the scroll represent the four commandments and the six commandments that have been disobeyed. And the judgment that has to come upon humanity because of its disobedience of God's ten commandments.

And therefore, this judgment will go forth into the house of the thief, verse four, and the house of the one who swears falsely. So turning back to Revelation 5, we begin to understand a little bit about the scroll. Revelation 5-1, I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne, a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.

So as the seven seals are opened up, we can expect to see something of what is going to come upon the human race, something that's going to come upon the earth because of its disobedience of God's commandments. And this question that we considered, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals? We saw it in relation to the redemption of the earth last week. We also want to consider it today in relation to who is worthy to execute judgment on the earth for disobedience to the ten commandments.

That is something like the question that Jesus asked the Pharisees in John chapter eight when they caught the woman in adultery and brought her before Jesus. And Jesus said similar words, who is worthy to throw a stone at her? Let him who is without sin cast the first stone. Who is worthy to judge the world? No one but Jesus.

Like the woman caught in adultery, only Jesus was there. He could throw a stone, but he didn't. He said, neither do I condemn you.

And now is the age of grace when he calls people to himself in grace. But two thousand years have gone by. The call of grace has gone forth throughout the world.

And a time will come when the call will be over and Jesus will begin to judge. And that is perfectly righteous of the Lord to do that. Now I want to show you another verse concerning the opening of the seals of the book.

Let me turn you to Isaiah twenty-nine and verse ten to thirteen. Now this concerns the unsealing of a book. We can say that the unsealing of a book is something like giving us understanding on what is inside the book.

That's another picture that comes through in the opening of a seal. A sealed book means something that I cannot understand. A book that is unsealed means something I can see.

Now Isaiah twenty-nine, verse ten, it says, The Lord has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep. He has shut your eyes, the prophets, and he has covered your heads, the seers. And the entire vision shall be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, or like a sealed scroll, and they say, Please read this, because I cannot understand this, for it is sealed.

So the meaning of being sealed is here, that I cannot understand it. Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, Please read this. And he will say, I cannot read.

And why is that? Because the Lord said, in verse thirteen, This people draw near with their words and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Now if I approach the book of Revelation in this attitude, that I draw near with my lips, that my hearts are far from him, then the book will be a sealed book to me. But that's why the Lord poured deep sleep upon these prophets, and covered the eyes of these seers, so that the book was sealed.

Whereas the book of Revelation is not meant to be sealed. Revelation twenty-two, and verse ten. And the Lord, we read here, I think it was the angel here, And the angel said to John, Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

Now I just showed you those verses, just to point out this fact, that when we come to the book of Bible, the book of Revelation, it is not a sealed book. That's clearly written at the end of the book. And therefore, if my eyes are blinded to it, probably the reason is what we looked at in Isaiah twenty-nine.

That my heart is far from the Lord. I draw near to him with my lips. God has given the book of Revelation, so that the eyes may be opened of his bondservants.

Now let's turn to chapter six. Now in chapter six, we can say that we have a bird's eye view of the entire future up to the coming of Jesus Christ. It is sort of like an introduction that gives a preview of the whole period, and then goes down to the details in chapter seven onwards.

And the proof of that is found in verse sixteen and seventeen of chapter six, where we read that the great people of the world say 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. That speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the day of the Lord. And in these six seals described in chapter six, we have a preview of what was going to come.

Now John the Apostle was given this revelation around 96 A.D. That was nearly 1900 years ago. And the Lord told him, I will show you what is going to take place in the future. And so we can see here, in a sense, what has taken place in 1900 years, but what is going to specifically take place in its intensity right towards the end time, in which we are living.

And that's why the book of Revelation has particular relevance to the time in which we live. Now I want to mention one other thing, that as we go into the book of Revelation we will discover that not everything is placed in chronological order. That means it's not that everything written in chapter seven comes before chapter eight, and then chapter nine follows after that, and chapter ten follows after that.

It's not like that. It gives us a glimpse of the future, then comes back in and fills up certain details, and then we get another glimpse, and comes back and fills up certain details of something that happens earlier. Now, I praise God that it's written like that, so that it doesn't satisfy my curiosity, because it's not easy for me to make a chart.

Now, in my flesh there's a great lust to make a chart, so that I can know this happens first, this happens next, this happens next, and God purposely doesn't satisfy that curiosity, which is a good thing. Because the word of God, and particularly the book of Revelation, has not been given to me primarily for that. Notice what Jesus said to the apostles in Acts chapter one, verses six to eight.

This is a very interesting passage. Just before Jesus went up to heaven, these were the last words that he spoke on earth before he went up to glory. And it's very important for us to know these words.

Now, I think most of us are familiar with Acts 1.8. That's a very well-known verse. You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses. But not so many people are familiar with verses six and seven.

Because just before Jesus went up to heaven, the apostles came around him and said, Lord, is it at this time that you are restoring the kingdom to Israel? They thought, now Jesus has arisen, he's going to restore the kingdom to Israel and drive out the Romans and establish the millennium, the rule of Jesus on earth. And Jesus didn't say, no, there's no such thing. He didn't say that.

There is such a thing that's going to come in the future. But he said, here is a very interesting word that he spoke, which is as important for us to know as verse eight, verse seven. He said to them, it is not for you to know the times or the epochs, which the Father has fixed by his own authority.

But, notice the but in verse eight. Here is something you need not know, and here is something you must have. Not knowledge, but power, verse eight.

Not knowledge, verse seven, but power. Not knowledge of the details of when this is going to happen and when that is going to happen, the time for this and the epoch for that. But, you must have the power of the Holy Spirit so that you can be my witnesses until the end time.

Now, that's important for us to keep in mind as we approach the book of Revelation. Right now, we are ready to look at Revelation six and verse one. And I saw when the lamb broke one of the seven seeds, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, Come.

Now, this happens four times. In verse three, we read the second living creature says, Come. In verse five, we read the third living creature says, Come.

And in verse seven, we read the fourth living creature says, Come. Now, these are the four living creatures that we considered in chapter four, verse seven. And we saw that they were like the cherubim whom Ezekiel saw.

But, we noticed in verse seven of chapter four, that these four are among those whom God has created, animals and man. The lion, the king of the beasts, the calf, the king of cattle, man, the king of creation, and the eagle, the king of birds. So, in a sense, we could say that these four creatures who are saying, Come, in chapter six, verse one, three, five, and seven, are expressing the voice of creation saying to Jesus, Come.

At the end of the Bible, we read that John himself says, Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, Revelation 22 and verse 20. But, all of creation is also crying out to the Lord to come.

And that we read in Romans chapter eight and verse 19. Romans 8, verse 19 to 22. Here we read, for the anxious longing of creation, we can say, is for the coming of Jesus Christ.

And it's an absolute shame when those who call themselves believers do not have an anxious longing for the coming of Jesus Christ. The anxious longing of creation, you know what creation is? The lions, the eagles, the calves, the birds. This creation is longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

That is when Jesus comes in glory. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it. And then, verse 21, the creation also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And the pains of childbirth are used in the New Testament to picture that which is a travail that's going on that will be completed only with the coming of Jesus Christ. There are many passages in Scripture that deal with that.

We don't have time to look for it now. And when these creatures say, come, the Lord Jesus is going to come. But he's going to come this time, not as the lamb to take away the sin of the world, but as the judge to judge.

And we see here in Revelation 6 and verse 2, And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow. And a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. Now we must

compare Scripture with Scripture.

Keep a finger there and turn to Revelation 19 and verse 11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat upon it is called Faithful and True.

And in righteousness he judges and wages war. And his eyes are as a flame of fire, and upon his head many crowns. Verse 16, And on his robe and on his tie he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

His name, verse 13, is called the Word of God. That is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. But what we see in Revelation 6, verse 2, is slightly different.

He doesn't have many crowns on his head. In Revelation 6, verse 2, it says that a crown was given to him. In other words, it was not something that he obtained by his own right.

He was allowed to have a crown, we can say. But he was on this white horse, and he had a bow. And he went out conquering and to conquer.

We see that this is a picture of someone who is imitating Christ. Someone who is claiming to be like Christ. Now, turn to Matthew chapter 24.

We'll find there's a lot of similarity between Revelation chapter 6 and Matthew 24. Because both passages are dealing with the end of the age. Matthew 6, Matthew 24, and Revelation 6. Matthew 24, we read in verse 3, The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked him, saying, Tell us, when will these things be? What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age? And Jesus answered and said to them, See to it that no one misleads you.

Here is the first white horse. Many will come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and will mislead many. That's the first sign Jesus gave.

And that's exactly what we see in Revelation 6, verse 2. Someone who comes on a white horse, drawing away people after him. People who are deceived. People who don't know the scriptures.

People who follow someone, thinking that they are following the Lord. And who are deceived. And let us pray.

And Jesus said, many will come in my name. And therefore we have to be particularly careful. Notice there.

They will come in my name. That is the significance of this white horse. A counterfeit Christ.

And notice, it says here, a number of times in chapter 6 of Revelation, we find this phrase, it was given. Verse 2, a crown was given to him. And the next horse, verse 4, it says it was given to that person to take peace from the earth.

The last part of verse 4, a great sword was given to him. And verse 8, it says, it was in the middle. Authority was given to them.

Now all these places, we find that something evil comes forth. But they were permitted, we can say. They were permitted to do that.

They were permitted to take peace from the earth, verse 4. A great sword. He was permitted to have a great sword so that men slay one another. Verse 8, that horse rider was permitted to have authority over the earth to kill.

In the same way, verse 2, he was permitted to have a crown. You remember the word of Jesus to Pilate in John 19, verse 11. When Pilate said, don't you know I've got power to crucify you? And Jesus said, you can have no power over me unless it were given to you.

It's the same phrase here. It was given to him. Just like it was given to Pilate, the father allowed him to have authority over Jesus.

We'll find that the father allows people to come and deceive. Now this will finally end up in the Antichrist. The Antichrist is the counterfeit Christ.

And we can say, ultimately, this white horse rider is clearly a symbol of the Antichrist. Of the one who will draw people after him. And people will think that this is our Messiah.

This is our Savior. Only if we follow him, we can be saved. But before the Antichrist comes on the face of the earth, many little Antichrists have arisen through the centuries.

And are arising even today. Turn to 1 John, chapter 2. 1 John, chapter 2, verse 18. Children, it is the last hour.

It was the last hour in 96 A.D. That means it was 11 P.M. in 96 A.D. So you can imagine where we are now. We are around 1159 now. It's just a few seconds left.

It is the last hour. And just as you heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now, many Antichrists have arisen. From this we know that it is the last hour.

Hitler, for example, was an Antichrist who had such a tremendous following of people. It was demonic, the power he had to draw people after him. We find many heathen godmen in India who are sort of mini-Antichrists.

And that spirit is unfortunately even found in the so-called Christian church, where some great leader gets people to follow him. And following him becomes more important than following Jesus Christ. So that is the symbol here of this counterfeit Christ.

Deception on a white horse, just like Jesus comes on a white horse. Similarity, the devil coming as an angel of light, deceiving people, and God permits it. And we read here, he went out conquering and to conquer, because the devil is bent on conquest, on conquering man thoroughly.

Then, the next horse, verses 3 and 4. And when he broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, And another, a red horse went out, and to him who sat on it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men should slay one another, and a great sword was again given to him. Permission was granted to him to get people to slay one another, and to take peace from the earth. This is a picture of war.

Turn to Matthew 24 again. Pilate said, don't you know I've got power to crucify you? And Jesus said, you can have no power over me unless it were given to you. It's the same phrase here, it was given to him.

Matthew 24, we saw that the first sign Jesus said was, Verse 5, many will come in my name saying, I am the Christ. What is the second horse? Verse 6, and you will hear of wars, and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, for that is not yet the end, for nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

So we see it's exactly like Jesus said. The second rider is a red horse, and he took peace from the earth, and a great sword was given to him, so that with that sword men could slay one another. Now this is going to be particularly true in the last days.

We know that in these 2,000 years there have been many wars, all these 1,900 years since John wrote this book of Revelation. But in all these 1,900 years there's never been any two wars which have been called world wars, as we have had in the 20th century. That's significant, that here we come across world wars, and wars have increased tremendously in this century, which is another indication that we are near the coming of Christ.

Now, as I said, just like the Antichrist is going to come, and many little Antichrists have arisen, the final time of war is going to be upon the face of the earth, but as we approach that summit, it's going to increase in intensity, and that's why we've already had two world wars in this century. And it's significant also that the horse is called a red horse. I think it is not without significance that communist countries are called red countries, and they are going to play a big part in the wars towards the end, as we read particularly in Ezekiel 38 and 39.

I just want to show you that passage briefly. In Ezekiel 38 and 39, we read about a great war that is going to take place over the nation of Israel, and the people who are going to attack Israel are called here in Ezekiel 38, verse 2, "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog." Now, these are descendants of Noah, whom you can read of in Genesis 10, verse 2 onwards, and history tells us that these people and their descendants spread over what is today the land of Russia. Then we read this word, the prince of Rosh, from which we have got the word Russia, Mishek, from which we get the word Moscow, and Tubal, from which we get the word Tobolsk, the capital of Siberia.

And from there it says that they will come and attack the nation of Israel. We don't have time to go into all that now. We'll do that in another study, perhaps.

But it's significant that the horse is red, that it's going to take peace from the earth, and that's going to make men slay one another. And perhaps there's never been in the history of the world, not even in Hitler's time, as much of killing of people as there has been in communist countries, all carefully hidden from the newspapers and everyone else, as in the 20th century. There was no communism before this century.

We're approaching the end, you see. Things are working out to the completion of God's purposes. Now, Revelation 6, verses 5 and 6. Here we read of the third seal and the third living creature, and the third one is a black horse.

And he signifies food scarcity that's going to increase in the last days. He who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard, as it were, a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, a quart of wheat, that means about a kilo of wheat, for a denarius, a denarius was one day's pay.

You can work that out. One kilo of wheat for one day's salary. And, if you want cheaper food, three kilos of barley for one day's salary.

But, do not harm the luxuries like oil and wine. It's going to be an amazing system, where the rich can enjoy their luxuries, and the poor are going to get poorer, and going to find it more and more difficult towards the end. Yeah, that's also something that's happened throughout the ages, but particularly in the last days.

James chapter five says this. James chapter five, verse one. Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.

Verse three. Your gold and your silver are rusted. Their rust will be a witness against you, will consume your flesh like a fire.

It is for the last days that you have stored up your treasure. Verse five. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure.

You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. Now, this is predicted that in the last days, as we approach the end, there will be increasing shortage of the necessities of life. Turn again to Matthew 24.

We considered false Christs, wars. What is the third thing Jesus said? Verse seven, the last part. There will be famine.

That's, again, exactly corresponding to what we see in Matthew six, Revelation six, verses five and six. Difficulty to obtain the necessities of life. Verse seven and eight of Revelation six.

Now we come to the fourth seal. The fourth seal, when the Lamb broke it, I heard the voice of the four living creatures saying, Come. Verse eight.

And I looked and behold an ashen, sickly, pale horse. And he who sat on it had the name of death. And that symbolizes death by disease.

And Hades. And Hades is the place of departed spirits, which we call hell. Death and hell were following with him.

And authority was given to him over one-fourth of the earth. That's quite a number when you think of the world population as four billion. One-fourth of the earth is going to be one billion.

To kill with sword, with famine, with pestilence, that is diseases, and with the wild beasts of the earth. Here are four instruments God uses. Weapons of warfare, disease, famine, and the beasts of the earth.

Now, let me turn you to Ezekiel chapter fourteen. Ezekiel fourteen. Ezekiel chapter fourteen and verses twelve to twenty-one.

Ezekiel fourteen verses twelve to twenty-one. Now, this is a related passage, and that's why I'm reading it. Then the word of the Lord came to me.

Now, this is the reason why God sends these judgments. And it's important for us to know why God sends these judgments, so that we have no part in them. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, if a country sins against me, or we can say a number of countries, the whole world, by committing

unfaithfulness, and I stretch out my hand against it, and destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it, and cut off from it both man and beast, even though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, who were among the three most righteous men in the Old Testament, were in the midst of that country, they could deliver only themselves by their own righteousness.

That teaches us that the righteous will be able to deliver themselves. And if I were to cause wild beasts to pass through the land, and they depopulated the land, and it became desolate so that no one could pass through it because of the wild beasts, and these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in the midst, as I live, they could not deliver even their own sons and daughters. They alone would be delivered, but the country would be desolate.

Now, in Noah's day, he could deliver his family, his wife, his three sons, and the three sons' wives, but now the Lord says that they will not be able to deliver their sons and daughters, if the sons and daughters are not righteous. And then, the same thing He says about bringing a sword, verse 17, or a plague, verse 19, even though Noah, Daniel, and Job were there, they could only deliver themselves. And then, verse 21, For thus says the Lord God, How much more when I send my four severe judgments against Jerusalem? What are these four? Sword, weapons of warfare, famine, wild beasts, and disease.

Those are the four which we saw in Revelation chapter 6, verse 7 and 8. And yet, there is grace there, that only one-fourth of the earth's population is wiped out. That is God speaking, so that the others may turn to righteousness. It is by righteousness that we protect ourselves from these four severe judgments.

I can't save my son, or my wife, or my brother, or my sister. If you are like Noah, you can save yourself. If you are like Daniel, you can save yourself, but not a single member of your family, unless they are like Daniel too.

Noah, Daniel, and Job, three outstanding examples in the Old Testament, whom God points out to in these last days for us to imitate, particularly in relation to the fourth seal. And for such people, the promise in Psalm 91 is particularly relevant. In Psalm 91, we read of these four judgments.

In Psalm 91, we read there about weapons of warfare in verse 5, the arrow that flies by day. We read there of disease, verse 6, pestilence. And the latter part of verse 6, I believe, relates to famine, destruction that lays waste at noon.

Noon is mealtime, that is the time when there is lack of food, people die of starvation. And wild animals in verse 13. You will tread upon the lion, the young lion, and the serpent you will trample down.

So these four judgments are mentioned in Psalm 91. Weapons of warfare, disease, wild animals, and famine. But it says about the righteous, those who are like Noah, Daniel, and Job, verse 7, a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, or like we read in Revelation 6, one billion, one-fourth of the world's population, but it shall not approach you.

Think of that, brothers and sisters. Think of that. It shall not approach you.

You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked. For you have made the Lord your dwelling place. No evil will befall you, verse 10, nor will any of these come near your house.

Amazing. But you will tread upon the lion and the cobra. Why? Verse 14, because he has loved me.

Therefore I will deliver him. I will set him securely on high. That's where the Lord is going to keep us, on high, securely.

Wonderful promise. And the challenge to us is to make sure that we qualify for that promise to be fulfilled in our lives. Now we come to the fifth seal, Revelation 6, verses 9-11.

The fifth seal speaks of tribulation. And when he broke the fifth seal, Revelation 6, verse 9, 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, will you 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.

Now why were these people killed? It's very important for us to notice it. They were slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they had held. Remember Paul's words to Timothy, Hold fast the form of sound work.

Here were people who had held fast to the whole counsel of God. They were not the compromisers. They were not the diplomats.

Who said things to tickle people's ears. They were not the people who were men-pleasers. If I please men, I cannot be the servant of Christ.

These were the true servants of Christ, who held fast the word of God as their testimony, and as a result of holding fast the word of God, they were slain. Their blood was shed. We read in Matthew 23, Matthew 23, where Jesus said, verse 34 and 35, Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes, that is, Bible teachers.

Some of them you will kill and crucify. Some of them you will scourge in your assemblies and persecute them from one city to another city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Yes, the prophets who proclaimed the word of God.

You remember when Cain shed the blood of Abel, the Lord told Cain, Your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground because you have slain him. Now, we see that in Revelation 6. They were slain, and they cried with a loud voice, verse 10, How long, O Lord, will you refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth? Now, this is the cry of an Old Testament prophet or an Old Testament saint. Many times in the Psalms, I could give you the references if you would like to look them up.

Some other time, Psalm 79, verse 10, we read words like this, Why should the nations say, Where is their God? Let there be known among the nations in our sight vengeance for the blood of thy servants which has been shed. They cried out for vengeance for the blood of thy servants. There are other Psalms as well.

Psalm 94, verses 1 to 7, and Psalm 119, verse 84, which also express the same thing. Lord, take revenge on these people who have shed our blood, like Abel's blood cried out for vengeance. But when we turn to Hebrews chapter 12, verse 24, we see something different.

In Hebrews chapter 12, the Old Covenant is contrasted with the New Covenant. And he says, You have not come to the Old Covenant, verse 18. You have not come to a mountain that can be touched where Moses was there, in verse 21.

But you have come to Mount Zion, verse 22. And verse 24, you have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, listen to this, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. The blood of Abel cried out for revenge.

The blood of Jesus cried out for mercy, forgiveness. And there is a fundamental difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Those who seek for revenge, they have not understood the blood of Jesus at all.

The blood of Jesus cries out for mercy. Jesus said, when His blood was pouring from His body, He said, Father, forgive them. Stephen, we read in Acts 7, when they threw stones at Him to kill Him, and the blood was flowing from Him, He cried, Lord, don't lay this sin to their charge.

That is a New Covenant cry. And that is one mark of a New Covenant Christian, that He does not desire revenge. But we read here in Revelation 6, that these people who are slain there, they are obviously the Old Testament saints, because they say, How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth? And this is because when John got this vision, that was the beginning of the church age, and there were very few Christians who had been slaughtered by that time.

There were a few. But most of those were back there from the time of Abel to Zechariah, that Jesus spoke of. These were the ones there, under the altar.

And what did the Lord tell them? Verse 11. There was given to them, to each of them, a white robe, to all these Old Testament saints. And they were told that they should rest for just a little while longer.

And the Lord said to these Old Testament saints who were slain for the word of God, Wait a little. Wait a little. Until the number of their fellow servants, This is the New Covenant people who are going to be slain for the word of God.

Until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed, and that is in these 20 centuries, also should be completed. There is a particular number that God has got of those who are to be slain for the word of God and for the testimony that they have held. And they were told, Just wait a little longer.

Just a little more time and that number will be complete. And we know that in these 2,000 years of church history, many, many, many, many thousands and thousands of Christians have died like Jesus and Stephen, asking God to forgive those who killed them. And who have died for the word of God and the testimony that they have held.

So we see here under the fifth seal that tribulation and persecution is part of our appointed lot. Let's turn back to Matthew 24. We were looking at how there is a comparison between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. Matthew 24 again, the first horse, verse 5, I am the Christ, the second one, wars and rumors of wars, and the third one, famine, verse 7. The fourth one, we saw this various type of calamities, including famines, referred to here by earthquakes in verse 8, the beginning of birth pangs.

And then the next one, which is the fifth seal, verse 9, then they will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you. And you will be hated by all nations on account of my name. This is speaking about Christians, not Jews.

My name means the name of Jesus Christ. You Christians will be hated by all nations on account of my name. That day is going to come, brothers and sisters, when every nation on the face of the earth hates a true Christian.

Not a diplomat who sits in the world council of churches and becomes well known and acceptable to everyone. Not that type of compromiser, but one who holds the word of God and proclaims the full counsel of God. He will be hated.

And at that time, many will fall away. They will join Babylon because you can save your life there. And they will betray one another.

That's happening even today in communist countries where one Christian betrays the other to the communists because he doesn't want to pay the price for standing true to the word of God. And they catch the other person and kill him. And that's exactly what we see here also taking place in the last days.

Remember the words of Jesus in John 16, verse 33. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world. Jesus never said that we will escape tribulation.

The teaching which teaches that believers will escape tribulation is not the teaching of the Holy Spirit. It's the teaching of the devil. Jesus said in the world you shall have tribulation.

It is a comfort loving Christianity, a compromising diplomatic Christianity that wants to escape tribulation and that has produced a theology where the church will escape tribulation. Even though Jesus said in the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good courage. I'm not going to take you out of the world.

I have overcome the world. Then he prayed to the Father in John 17, and verse 15. And what did he pray to the Father in John 17, verse 15? He prayed to the Father, I'm not asking you to take them out of the world.

According to human understanding, we should be taken out of the world so that we don't face any tribulation. But Jesus says, I'm not praying that you should be taken out of the world, but keep them from evil, keep them from sin, keep them from disobedience, and keep them from Satan's power, from the evil one. That's our calling.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And the apostles preached that. Acts 14, verse 22.

When the apostles went around establishing churches, they went around different churches, and they strengthened the souls of the disciples. Verse 22, Acts 14. And encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying what? You shall escape tribulation, for the Lord will protect you and take you out from that.

That's not what they said. They strengthened the souls of the disciples, saying what? Through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God. That is the message of Jesus and the apostles, which has been so diluted today.

And so the Lord calls us to face tribulation. Now we see back again in Luke chapter 6. Luke 6. A little more time. The end is near.

Verse 12 to 17. Speaks about the wrath of God that is going to fall upon the earth. Tribulation is the wrath of man.

Tribulation is the wrath of Satan against believers. God has never promised that He will protect us from the wrath of man or from the wrath of Satan. He has promised that we shall overcome, but not that we shall escape it.

But the wrath of God, which comes in verse 12 to 17 onwards, that we shall certainly escape. Sure. And He broke the sixth seal.

Verse 12. 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 cast its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it was 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 finally come.

Here is where the wrath of God finally comes upon the earth. There we shall be protected. Turn back to Matthew 24.

And we find the sixth seal there also. Matthew 24. We read there, Then they will deliver you up to tribulation.

Verse 9. That is the fifth seal. And then, Verse 15. When you see the abomination of desolation and so on.

And then we read, Verse 29, Matthew 24. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened. Exactly what we just read.

The moon will not give its light. The stars will fall from the sky. The powers of the heavens will be shaken.

And then the Son of Man, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. That is what we look forward to.

To the coming of Jesus Christ. Before that time of wrath bursts upon this earth, Jesus will appear as the morning star to take us up. The morning star appears just before the sunrise.

After the midnight. After the darkness. We read in Matthew 25, At midnight, the cry went out, Behold, the bridegroom cometh.

In the pitch darkness of tribulation, the cry goes out. The bridegroom is coming. And before the sun rises on the earth, those who are ready will be taken up.

They shall see Jesus as the morning star. And so we see that what we see at the end of Revelation 6 is what the Old Testament prophets called the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord.

I want you to turn you to Acts chapter 2 verse 19 and 20. Acts of the Apostles chapter 2 we read about the day of Pentecost where when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, they said to those who charged them with being drunk, they said, No, this is not being drunk. Verse 16, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about.

It shall be in the last days, God says, I'll pour out my spirit on all mankind, your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and so on. And then, verse 19, I will grant wonders in the sky above, signs on the earth, blood, fire, vapor or smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the great and glorious day of the Lord will come.

It's all put together. The pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the end of the age. And in between verse 18 and 19 comes this 2,000 year period where the Holy Spirit has been outpoured.

Where now we can be filled with the Spirit and be His children and partake of the divine nature. But what we read in verse 17 and 18 is the beginning of this age called the church age. And verse 19 and 20 speaks about the end.

And it's all brought together there. Because the prophet Joel didn't understand clearly this church age that lay between the outpouring of the Spirit and the second coming of Jesus Christ. They called it the great day of the Lord.

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