

REVELATION: HELP FOR LIVING, HOPE FOR LEAVING

Sermon no. 11

THE BEGINNING OF THE END: THE SIX SEALS

Revelation 6:1-17

It is never a pleasant task to talk about the judgment of God. But as the picture of the Great Tribulation unfolds starting with the passage today, this is what we will be looking at from Revelation ch. 6 all the way to ch. 19. In God's mind, the way to comfort suffering believers among the seven churches then (and now) was to remind them who was in charge then, today, and eternally.

After Jesus receives the right and authority from the Father to judge and cleanse the earth preparatory to His reign (chapter 5), the first six seals of the Title Deed to earth are opened, and each is a form of judgment. We may consider these six seals of judgment in the following way:

1. THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD EXPRESSED THROUGH MAN (verses 1-8)

The First Seal: The Anti-Christ

The Second Seal: War

The Third Seal: Famine

The Fourth Seal: Death through war (violence), famine, disease, and wild beasts.

- While righteous judgment is always God-intended, for men it is often self-inflicted.
- Factors that increase the intensity of the Great Tribulation:
 - 1) The Holy Spirit will not restrain evil any more.
 - 2) The true church, as light and salt, will be gone from the earth.
 - 3) Satan knows that his time is running out and will do extreme measures in a futile attempt to frustrate God's plans.
 - 4) Evil men will be free to carry out their evil plans. The Antichrist will take over earth for a period of time.
 - 5) There will be direct judgment from God. As verse 17 says, "For the great day of their wrath has come; and who can stand?"

2. THE FIFTH SEAL: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD EXPECTED BY MARTYRS: (verses 9-11)

- The judgment of God teaches us hope. All injustices will be corrected and vindicated someday. And whatever horrors we go through for being unashamed of Christ, we are never to seek revenge on those who do unspeakable things to us. Suffice it to say that in heaven the appeal is already made by Tribulation martyrs. Let God do what He does best.

3. THE SIXTH SEAL: THE JUDGMENT OF GOD EXTENDED THROUGH "ACTS OF GOD" (verses 12-17)

- The Picture:
 - "A great earthquake . . . every mountain and island was moved"
 - "The sun turned black, the whole moon turned blood red"
 - "The stars fell to earth"
 - "The sky receded like a scroll"
- God is never unclear in a time of judgment. Men will know they are dealing with a God who was very offended by them: *"The kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'"*
- The judgment of God teaches us reverence for God. It reminds us to worship a God who, out of ignorance, we often question or even criticize for "slowness" or "inaction". Reading the book of Revelation is a good reminder to stop such attitudes.

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Is God slow? Is He uncaring? Does He even know what's going on? Are you plagued by questions like these? Is it possible that your sight is too narrow or too short?

Let the reminder of the power, sovereignty, majesty and justice of God that we see today realign your perspective. God is in control and one day He will make all things right.

Your faith is worth it. Your sacrifice is worth it. Your suffering for what is right, is worth it. Now let your worship sustain your walk.