

The Beginning of God's Wrath

MEMORY VERSE

“And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand” (Revelation 6: 16, 17).

TEXT: Revelation 6:1-17

The text discusses the opening of six out of the seven seals mentioned in the previous chapter. Each of the seals represented a future event that was symbolically revealed to John the Beloved (Revelation 5:1). By this, we are warned that the world in which we live, will not always be there. Besides, the evil works of men shall sometime be brought to judgment. While all sinners will suffer fear, heartache and sorrows, the saints of God would rest and be avenged by God.

RETRIBUTION TO THE SINNERS DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

(Revelation 6:1-8; Matthew 24:4-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12; Daniel 8:23-25; 11:21-38; Isaiah 26:20, 21).

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a White horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Revelation 6: I, 2). It was established that no man in heaven or earth or

under the earth could open the sealed book except the Lamb (Revelation 5: 1, 3, 6, 7, 9). When the Lamb opened it, one of the four beasts declared “Come and see”. He (John) also said “And I saw”

Question 1: What attribute do we need as faithful witnesses of God's word?

Every seal that was opened in this chapter was followed by one or a combination of “Come and see”, “I saw” or “I beheld”. The Lord wanted the apostle John to be a witness of those things and as a faithful witness, he paid attention to all he was called to take note of; he beheld and he saw. As witnesses of the grace of God, we must pay attention to divine revelation of God's word in the church or during our personal devotions.

Question 2: What do the horses mentioned in the passage represent?

Each of the first four seals that was opened was followed by horses, each seal for a colour. These all refer to one thing, as horses are symbol of royalty and reigning, the reign of the antichrist but the diversity of colours refer to different characteristics of his reign on earth. The “white horse” represents false peace and deception; the “red horse” for bloodshed and murderous acts; the “black horse” is a symbol of dark, hidden, secret and self-centred economic policies, and the “pale horse” is a symbol of death just as a dying or dead person looks pale. These underscores the untold hardship that those who would live on earth at that time

would be subjected to. The sufferings shall be so sore that nothing like it had ever occurred in human history. The hardship the Jews were subjected to during the holocaust would be nothing to be compared with the chapter of God's wrath that would be unleashed during the great tribulation.

At the opening of the first seal, there was “a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (Revelation 6:2). It should be noted that this is the very first event after the rapture of the saints. The rider on the horse had in his hand a bow and on his head a crown. He would both rule and destroy! The horse is a symbol of dominion, victory and conquest. All these the antichrist would have when he comes after the rapture. His identity, though was concealed, but was no doubt a mimic Of Christ (Revelation 19:11). This is the false Christ or the antichrist that would rule the world when the saints are taken out of this earth. His strategy, in collaboration with the false prophet, would be massive delusion that would lead many to damnation. Many sinners that would live on earth during the great tribulation shall hardly be saved.

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (Revelation 6:3,4). The reign of the antichrist will also be characterised by wars, killings and all sorts of murderous acts. Though it took over the earth by temporary peace, yet he would trouble the earth. People would instigate the death of their loved ones and there shall be betrayals.

“And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine” (Revelation 6:5,6). There would be a serious economic recession on earth during the period of

the great tribulation. Scarcity of commodities would lead to inflation. Those who might try to do business without allegiance to the antichrist would do so to their own peril. Many will even lose their lives.

“And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to Eli with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:7,8). This shows that the Period of the reign of the antichrist is going to be characterised by pandemic situations, worldwide starvations, brutality and gruesome killings. All these will be the lots of those who would be on earth during the great tribulation.

REST TO THE SAINTS DURING THE GREAT TRIBULATION

(Revelation 6:9-11; Isaiah 26:20,21 Psalm 116:15; 1 Peter 4:4, 5; Hebrews 4:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:9)

At the opening of the fifth seal, “...the SOUIS of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” cried for vengeance (verse 9-11). Their souls were despaired that vengeance on their martyrdom was delayed. But they were consoled that, though the vengeance was delayed, it would not be denied. They only needed to wait for “a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (verse 1). Meanwhile, they were to “rest yet”.

Question 3: What can we learn from the response to the souls of the saints which cried for vengeance?

The period of the great tribulation is to unleash God's wrath on the sinners. At the same time, the saints who have slept in the Lord are to rest in heaven till the second advent of our Lord to the earth for final reign and judgment. These teach us a lot of lessons as believers. One, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. When any of God's saints die as a result of the cruel hands of the persecutors, retribution is inevitable. Two, only those who are slain for the word of God which they lived up to, that is for the testimony which they held, shall be preserved. Three, God's response to judgment may not fit into our timing. What we only need to do is to leave the judgment of the persecutors to God in His own time and His own way. Four, whether we request for the punishment of the persecutors or not, God takes account of it and would give to every man according as His work shall be. Five, after our painful toil and torture for the kingdom of God on earth, there is an assurance of eternal rest.

Question 4: Which category of God's saints are qualified for God's rest and escape from the great tribulation?

It is important to note that, even saints that were not martyred will also rest in heaven as long as they keep up a life of holiness till the rapture of the Church. Those who had died in Christ even before the rapture are equally candidates of God's rest. Whether we exit via persecution or natural death, we will enter into God's rest. All our pains and suffering will for ever be forgotten. It is our responsibility as long as we live to follow peace with all men and holiness. Only on the condition of holy living can we enter God's eternal rest.

RESTLESSNESS OF THE SINNERS AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION

(Revelation 6:12-17; 19:11-21; Zephaniah 1:7-14; Amos 5:18-20; Matthew 24:29, 30; Jude 1:14, 15; Isaiah 33: 14; Hebrews 12:25-29)

Immediately after the tribulation, the Lord Jesus Christ will physically come to the earth. He would come to judge the earth for its iniquities. He would physically be seen by the great and common men of the earth.

Question 5: What events would herald the coming of Christ to judge the sinners on earth?

The events that would herald His appearance would be so chaotic and frightful that the whole of the solar system and the world natural phenomena would be disrupted. The sinners would become restless and disturbed. These would all follow the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-14). At that time, there shall be no hiding place for any perpetrators of evil.

Question 6: What would be the fate of the sinners when the Lord returns to judge them on earth?

Unfortunately, there shall neither be any great man nor mean man as there shall neither be free man nor bond man for all shall be alike in the face of eternal judgment. “And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?” (Revelation 6:15-17). It is established that nobody shall be able to stand ON the day of the Lord. On the day of the Lord, money and material possessions will not matter. “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” (Isaiah 33: 14).