

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## How Long, Oh Lord!

### Rev. 6:9-17

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing with the vision that started in chapter 4 where John was summoned up into heaven in the Spirit. There he saw the throne room of God and the worship that was taking place and realized that God was still in control. This vision was given so Christians could understand why God would allow this world to experience wars and natural disasters and murders and immorality. This is the natural course of sin. Men bent on immorality, personal pleasure, greed, and power.

God is allowing this chaos to continue during these last days on earth in order to judge all men based upon their deeds. God's desire is, as it always has been, that all men will repent of their sins and accept His free gift of salvation that was accomplished through the death of His Son, Christ, on the cross. He is patiently waiting until for all of His children to come to Him.

That was the purpose of the plagues in Egypt. God, through Moses, kept asking pharaoh to repent of his slavery and let His people go. Pharaoh continued to harden his heart and thus the plagues continued.

Jonah was sent to Nineveh to proclaim that in forty days the city would be destroyed in forty days if they did not repent. Nineveh was known for its wickedness and was one of Israel's fiercest enemies. Surprisingly, the Ninevites believed Jonah's message and repented, wearing sackcloth and covering themselves in ashes. God had compassion on them and did not destroy them.

Last week we saw the first four seals broken. They gave us a vision of what life is like in the world during this time. It is not a bunch of specific things. Rather it is a BIG PICTURE of calamity and tribulation as these four horsemen are being sent out to every corner of the earth. They are sent out bringing war, violence, famine, and death to mankind. The sinfulness of man has been allowed to run unchecked in this world.

This calamity started when Christ ascended into heaven, it is going on today, and it will get progressively worse and worse until Christ returns. It is a time of tribulation and a time of judgment as these four horsemen have been unleashed upon the earth.

We understand, from God's perspective, why His people are being assaulted and opposed and persecuted throughout these last days. As the wrath of God is being unleashed upon the dragon, who is Satan, as well as his henchmen, the false prophet and the beast, and all of those who knowingly or not serve them, all of that rage and hostility is coming back upon God and upon His people. So that even as they are experiencing the calamity, the

judgment, and the tribulation upon themselves they are responding with hostility toward God.

We hear that anger all of the time.

If God really exists, they why did the tornado rip through Joplin killing 158 people (Christians and non-Christians alike) on May 22, 2011?

If God really exists and is in control, why would He allow such atrocities to happen!

They are always shaking their fist at God and when they can't reach God, you know who their fists turn to? Their fists turn to His people. You and me. The Christians. The dopes who are foolish enough to believe in a God such as this.

But this is reality in our world of tribulation. It is why Paul says that anyone who desires to live a Godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer tribulation and persecution. It is a part of life because there is any angry enemy who hates us and wants to destroy us.

But the Good News is that God provides spiritual protection for His people. That is what the sealing of the 144,000 represents in chapter 7. He provides spiritual protection ensuring our faith will not fail amidst the tribulation even as the body is destroyed and killed by calamity and enemies. We will look at this next time.

But for now, this is the big picture. This is what is going on earth and it is important that we see it from God's perspective.

Remember that Jesus tells John in this Revelation that there is this blessing that comes to all of those who read, and who hear, and who understand these words.

I can tell you that it helps me tremendously to be able to see the big picture of history and of life from God's perspective. Because it really does help to make sense of what is happening out there. It is a blessing to know that God is still in control and is patiently waiting for His will to be done in heaven and on earth based upon His timing.

## **All Stand and Read Scripture**

Revelation 6:9-17 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, 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; <sup>10</sup> 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?" <sup>11</sup> 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, would be completed also.

<sup>12</sup> 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>13</sup> 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>14</sup> The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. <sup>15</sup> Then 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; <sup>16</sup> 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; <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

## Prayer

### BODY:

#### I. THE FIFTH SEAL - MARTYRS.

Revelation 6:9-11 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup> When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, 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; <sup>10</sup> 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?" <sup>11</sup> 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, would be completed also.*

Suddenly the scene changes. We leave earth and see a view of what's happening in heaven again. Here the Lamb breaks the fifth seal and we see the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God. We are moving from horses to heroes. The martyr's life-blood has been poured out as an offering and sacrifice to God, and He has received and accepted it!

In the Old Testament sacrificial system, this was the wine poured out around the base of the alter as an offering to God. The drink offering is an analogy of the martyrs life. Their blood has been poured out and given to God.

In many ways all Christians are martyrs. In baptism, the repentant believer dies to his old, sinful, way of life and we are reborn to a new life in Christ. Notice that John says that the martyrs were slain "**because of the testimony which they had maintained**". Not only do Christians die and are born again when we come to salvation, but we must continue to die to self during our lifetime on earth. Thus dying to self is both a one-time event and a lifelong process.

And as John listens he hears the martyrs CRYING OUT FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT to fall upon the wicked. "**Those who dwell on the earth**" are those who are opposed to God and His purposes. The martyr's question to God is, "**How long**" will this wickedness be allowed to roam the earth unchecked and unpunished! "**How long, O Lord?**"

And don't we cry out the same? How long for Saddam? How long for Osama ben Laden? How long for North Korea? How long for radical Muslims? How long for terrorism? How long will sin reign?

And the answer comes to the martyrs and to us – "**Wait.**" In perfect time, God will send forth wrath. But there are still more martyrs to come! The martyrs have been chosen, a number has been established, and when the last one comes to the altar – then Christ will come again! Christ came once when the time was right, and He will come again when the time is right!

It makes me wonder about our timid attitude today. We are so careful to be sure we don't offend anybody with our faith! We sure wouldn't want to upset someone else and cause them to not like us!

This old man John could have just shut up and enjoyed his old age; but instead he's on Patmos watching and writing this vision.

Can we ever understand, or hope to join, the martyrs? The white robes of purity and victory are given to them because they are so very special to God! They cry out now – and will continue to. Their cries will increase until that day!

## **II. THE SIXTH SEAL - TERROR.**

Revelation 6:12-14 (NASB)

<sup>12</sup>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>13</sup>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>14</sup>The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Then Jesus breaks the sixth seal. We are brought to the brink of the end as John sees THE REALM OF THE “WHAT IS TO BE.”

I don't know if you caught it or not. How many events were listed in verses 12 - 14?

1. A Great Earthquake.
2. The Sun Became Black.
3. The Moon Became like Blood.
4. The Stars fell to the Earth.
5. The Sky was Split Apart.
6. Every Mountain was Moved.
7. Every Island was Moved.

This is not coincidence. In apocryphal writing, the number seven indicates completeness.

Whether these are literal or not, there is a picture of TERROR UPON TERROR – worse than any we've known. All of these events are found in the Old Testament. It means that these terrors must be recognized as DIVINE INTERVENTIONS! **In each case the context is the close of history.** And the New Testament strongly affirms this. Check out Mark 13, or Matthew 24, or Luke 21 where Christ says that there will be a day of judgment. And here in Revelation Christ repeats Himself from heaven!

What does the future hold?

The world is coming to an end and Jesus is coming again. This time for judgment!

## **III. WHO CAN STAND?.**

Revelation 6:15-17 (NASB)

<sup>15</sup>Then 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; <sup>16</sup> 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; <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Did you catch it? How many groups of men were listed in verse 15?

1. Kings of the Earth.
2. The Great Men.
3. The Commanders.
4. The Rich.
5. The Strong.
6. Every Slave.
7. Every Free Man.

Verses 15-17 confirms there is a time of judgment coming. By referencing seven groups of men, Jesus is revealing to John and us that it will be a COMPLETE JUDGMENT OF ALL PEOPLE – great or small!

**Everyone will face it!** There will be no exemptions! Even the KINGS and the GREAT MEN and the COMMANDERS and the RICH, who are used to getting by with their misdoings due to their power and wealth, will be judged. They will not be able to pay off or grant favors to their accusers or kill their adversaries as they are used to doing. The presence of God and the wrath of the Lamb will be so severe that people will seek to hide from it. People will feel it's better to have a mountain fall on them than to face the wrath of the living God in judgment!

The English language does not always give justice to Greek words because one word in English may be translated from multiple Greek words that have very different meanings.

There are two Greek words for wrath in Revelation. THUMOS (Thoo-Moss') refers to the emotions. It is a sudden boiling up of anger that will fade away.

The second word is ORGE (Or-Gay'). Orge is not an emotion; it is a violent anger that will not go away and leads to punishment.

Orge is the word that is used here. It is not that God will have a few hissy-fits; it is God's everlasting wrath of sin! It's the same wrath God displayed at Calvary. The cross was not only salvation in its fullest form, but also judgment. That's why Calvary is the only place to escape God's wrath. **Only there do wrath and mercy meet!** The day is coming when people will not be able to go to Calvary for mercy. The road will be blocked. And they will face the full fury of God's wrath and judgment.

Is there anything worse than wars, violence, and famine? **Yes! Try the wrath of God!**

That's why, beginning with Adam and Eve, people have tried to hide from God. That is why men have tried! And that is why they will continue to try to hide from God. Sin cannot stand before the presence of Almighty God!

## **CONCLUSION:**

So that begs the question, if all of us have sinned, **"Who is able to stand?"**

How can a holy God be reconciled to unholy people?

That question demands yet another: Since God is a just God, how can the relationship between a holy God and an unholy people be restored without some gross act of injustice?

When we look to the cross we see Jesus Christ serving the just sentence of a sinner. There on the cross Christ's heart stops beating and He experiences physical death. He is punished by facing the fury of the wrath of God. There on the cross, he faces the justice and the torment of hell.

So where is the mercy of the cross? All we see here is Christ experiencing all wrath and no mercy. How can I say that wrath and mercy meet here?

Let me explain. Christ has never sinned, so, why would a sinless man be suffering God's wrath? Because Christ walked into that courtroom and stood **between** the judge and the guilty person, and said, "I will serve his sentence." He took upon Himself sin to such an extent that He became sin. He became vile and detestable in God's eyes—the most vile and detestable thing that could ever exist—and God poured out the full measure of His wrath upon Him until every bit of justice was satisfied.

Christ served the complete sentence of just wrath that I deserved. This is the mercy of the cross, the sinless One serving the sentence of the sinner. Now we see that God has a purpose in his mercy and there is a purpose for his patience.

**2 Peter 3:9 (NASB)**

**<sup>9</sup>The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**

And now we see why God has been patient in mercy. Christ took my sentence upon himself so that I can experience more than patience but temporary mercy. That mercy is expressed in patience—in wrath delayed—but that mercy is also expressed in grace, in wrath substituted, wrath transferred to Christ; God's perfect sacrifice.

God did not owe you this mercy of patience, yet he extended it to you, and you did repent, and you did receive his forgiveness for that sin. The punishment of that sin was fully paid by Jesus Christ! **Praise God for this patient mercy!**

The unbeliever too, has experienced God's patient mercy. He is experiencing it right now. How do I know? Because he is still alive. God has not yet acted in final judgment toward him. God's desire is that all men would repent.

When God's mercy comes to an end, all that will be left will be wrath and judgment? All men will face His wrath and judgment.

So, **WHO CAN STAND?**

**Revelation 12:11 (NASB)**

**<sup>11</sup>And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.**

**He is Lord!**