



## A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

Week 43: The Seal Judgements, Part 11

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### REVIEW:

- A. We are getting close to completing our study of the six Seal Judgements in ***Revelation Chapters 6 through 8.***
- B. We've concluded our study of Seal Judgement #5, and last week we spent some time studying the five resurrection events in the Bible
- C. That was a timely study since we had just learned about the martyred souls under the altar, and we had recently studied the three-part composition of mankind (body, soul, and spirit).
- D. This week, we now turn our attention to one of the most hotly debated portions of the book of ***Revelation, Chapter 6:12-17.***
- E. This passage is greatly misunderstood by many. We'll do our best to get through the details here.

### I. OVERVIEW / GENERAL COMMENTS:

- A. Various efforts have been made to draw distinctions between the events of the first five Seal Judgments and what happens after the opening of the Sixth Seal Judgement.
- B. It can be argued that the first five seals each present a particular force: 1.) false peace and spiritual deception, 2.) war and conflict, 3.) famine and economic ruin, 4.) death and global genocide, and 5.) persecution and religious martyrdom.
- C. The bigger point is up to now, the impact of the first five seals, though unprecedented globally, can still be explained as an intensification of what history (especially events within our own times) has already recorded.
- D. That is the reason why some argue that the first five seals are not speaking of God's wrath upon man, but rather man's wrath upon man.
- E. To illustrate this, we today are not unfamiliar with the false peace assurances of socialism. We have seen plenty of political deception in our own time. The same is true for war and conflict.
- F. In the last few years, we have also seen deliberate campaigns of depopulation, intentional famine and food shortages, planned diseases, and a rise in persecution and martyrdom.
- G. Since the Rapture has not yet occurred, we are already seeing early signs of what will become far greater, far more intentional, and far more deliberate and strategic depravities.
- H. We see hints already of what will be coming upon the earth after 'the Restrainer' has been removed, and after the church is taken up.
- I. So, I think the argument is sound that the first five Seal Judgments record an intense exacerbation of things we see starting to happen in our own time.

- J. This is easy to understand when we grasp the depraved agenda of the globalists. This is easy to understand when we see the work and ambitions of unregenerate mankind.
- K. As I've shared before, it is my belief that the Seal Judgements, up through #5, occur within that undefined gap of time between The Rapture and the start of The Tribulation.

**NOTE:** With the opening of the sixth seal however, all such previous explanations vanish. The signs and events which accompany this seal are unmistakable in their uniqueness and scope. They've never occurred before, and that's a very different dynamic than what we see with the first five Seal Judgements.

Let's try to wrap our heads around the gravity of these things which will take place:

## II. Cosmic Events and Earthquakes

NOTE: It is difficult to describe any scene more moving or more terrible than the scene described at the opening of the sixth seal.

- A. We've had bad earthquakes, but not like this!
- B. We've had catastrophic cosmic events, but nothing of this magnitude!
- C. The unprecedented severity of the earthquake and the cosmic disruptions that will take place when Jesus Christ breaks the sixth seal forces a couple of conclusions:
  1. **First**, this will be an awesome and clear expression of the wrath of God, not the work or ambitions of unregenerate mankind.
    - a. What has happened within the scope of the first five Seal Judgments is clearly within mankind's abilities to bring about.
    - b. But what will happen within the events of the Sixth Seal Judgment are clearly brought about by God's wrath – by HIS direct intent.
    - c. The text says as much. In **vs. 16b**, the unsaved people on the earth call these events *"the wrath of the Lamb."*
    - d. These cosmic events are not man's doing, they are God's doing.
  2. **Second**, this is a very clear 'line in the sand' moment. This is a point where a BIG change takes place. Everything from this point onwards is different.
    - a. I believe this is the point where God's prescribed judgement on earth begins.
    - b. My personal opinion is this is the judgement which the martyred saints under the altar were calling out for in Seal Judgement #5.
    - c. They wanted to know, *"when will you judge the inhabitants of the earth?" (Revelation 6:10)*. Well, now that time has come!
    - d. Said another way, somewhere right around this point is when the seven-year Tribulation starts.
    - e. Once again, as with the previous conclusion, the text says as much. Again, the unsaved people on the earth state *"the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

- f. Perhaps due to the testimony of all the martyred saints, the unsaved inhabitants of the earth are forced to admit the truth: the Day of the Lord has come!
3. These conclusions are supported by other passages in Scripture: **Cf. Isaiah 34:4** (This is a prophetic chapter describing the events of The Tribulation): *“All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree.”* This is nearly identical to the cosmic events described in **Revelation 6:12-14**.
  4. **Cf. Joel 2:30-31** (NOTE: This is another prophetic passage describing the events of The Tribulation): *“And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.”*
    - a. NOTE: Again, these are similar descriptions as found in **Revelation 6:12-14**
    - b. This specific passage in Joel provides a couple of other clues we should pay attention to. These cosmic events take place *“...BEFORE the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.”*
    - c. This would affirm that Seal Judgement #6 is the point just before, or about when, The Tribulation starts.
    - d. Recall, the inhabitants of the earth state as much in : *“the great day of their wrath has come” (Cf. Revelation 6:16).*
    - e. There are *“columns of smoke.”* This is – in all probability – a reference to volcanic activity.
    - f. With such earthquakes as **Revelation 6:12-14** describes, this is no surprise.
    - g. It is also part of the reason the *“sun turns to darkness, and the moon to blood.”* There will be a tremendous amount of ash and debris in the air that result in these visuals.

**NOTE:** This is not the only time in the course of The Tribulation that these sorts of massive earthquakes and cosmic events will take place.

- D. In **Matthew 24:29-30**, Jesus describes very similar cosmic events *“after the distress of those days,”* and *“at the time of the sign of the Son of Man.”*
  1. I take this to mean near the end of The Tribulation. That is a different timeframe, roughly seven years after what we are reading about in **Revelation 6:12-17**.
- E. This second similar event is also supported by the description of the Seventh Bowl Judgement, which would be the very last judgement BEFORE Jesus Christ’s physical Second Coming. **(Cf. Rev. 16:17-21)**
  1. Here again, earthquakes play a major role, and again, they are worse than before.

2. In this passage, the earthquake is described as the worst *“that has ever occurred since man has been on earth.”*
  3. Comparatively speaking, the earthquake in the Sixth Seal Judgment *“moves every mountain and island from its place.”* That’s a drastic change in geography/topography.
  4. But in the seventh Bowl Judgement, *“every island flees away and the mountains could not be found.”* Basically, islands and mountains are not just moved, they disappear.
  5. This underscores the whole “birth pangs” dynamic Jesus spoke of in **Matthew 24:8**. Everything keeps getting worse, all the way up to the end.
  6. Even the earthquakes intensify till the last one is noted as being the worst in the entire history of the earth.
- F. Lastly, a different passage in **Joel 3:14-15** affirm that these cosmic phenomena occur ALSO at the end of The Tribulation.
1. **Joel 2:30-31** describe these events as *“BEFORE the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes.”*
  2. However, **Joel 3:14-15** describe similar cosmic events at the END of The Tribulation: *“Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.”*
    - a. This is a reference to the Armageddon event where God draws the nations and the multitudes together into one place to receive His final judgment and destruction.
    - b. Again, we see the phenomena of the cosmic signs.

**NOTE:** Remember, the Bible says the *sun* and *moon* were created for “signs” (**Cf. Genesis 1:14**).

- In our passage in **Rev. 6:12-14**, the sun and moon will provide indication that the events associated with this seal cannot be explained by natural phenomena, but they result instead from God who controls the universe.
- This fact is not lost on the inhabitants of the earth who recognize that *“the day of (God’s) wrath has come” (vs. 16b)*. They, too, attribute the events of this sixth seal judgment to supernatural intent.

D. Again in (**Revelation 6:12-14**) The effect of these cosmic events and earthquakes.

NOTE: Some of these effects are easier to understand than others. We will look at the easy ones, the hard ones, and the incomprehensible ones.

1. (**EASY**) *“The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red.”*
  - a. I think this is one of the easier phenomenon in this particular passage to understand. There will be an unprecedented amount of volcanic ash, smoke, and dust in the immediate atmosphere.

- b. The passage does not specify ‘volcanoes,’ but I think earthquakes of this dimension will introduce many volcanoes at this time. Furthermore, recall the “*columns of smoke*” phrase from **Joel Ch. 2**. It is not a stretch to consider volcanic activity at this future time.
  - c. The effect of all this debris in the air is turning the sun dark and the moon red. We’ve seen this sort of phenomena in recent years as smoke from area fires darkens the sun and makes the moon red.
  - d. SCIENCE: Although the sun is darkened from an earthly perspective, the moon continues to reflect the sun’s light. The path light follows between the sun and moon is only minimally affected since this path is much farther out in the atmosphere).
  - e. These events, again, are on an unprecedented scale. The amount of ash and debris in the air will be at levels not seen before. The effect on the light from the sun and moon on to the earth will be profound.
2. **(HARD):** “*the stars in the sky fell to earth as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind.*”
- a. The word *stars* here in Greek is “*asteres,*” from which we get the word *asteroid*.
  - b. It seems best to me to understand this as a description of asteroids or meteors raining down on the earth.
  - c. Some commentators suggest this is angels, also called “stars” in parts of Scripture, being sent down to earth. However, the context does not support that as the ideal conclusion.
  - d. The most likely identification of these falling stars is that of a great swarm of asteroids that pummel the earth. This event, would kick up dust, start fires, initiate earthquakes and volcanic activity, and so on which all contribute to the ash and debris in the atmosphere.
  - e. An event of THIS magnitude has never occurred in historic times, though scientists have long speculated about the possibility of a future earth catastrophe caused by a swarm of asteroids or meteors.
3. Lastly, we go to the **INCOMPREHENSIBLE** events. This is the toughest description to understand from this passage: “*the sky receded like a scroll, rolling up....*”
- a. Phrases like this one tempt us to go with a non-literal interpretation, to lean into a “symbolic” interpretation instead.
  - b. BUT NOT SO FAST.... Sometimes we need to reconsider our knee-jerk reactions.
    - Just because events are far removed from our daily experience or conventional understanding, does not mean they cannot be initiated exactly as described by Almighty God!
    - The ‘cosmos’ or the universe is largely beyond our grasp of comprehension. Truly, we know very little about it and how it all fits together.

- We need to be careful that we don't short-circuit a supernatural event that brings glory to God simply because we cannot fit it into our little box of comprehension.
  - c. **Let me share my view of what I think might be happening here.**
    - Clearly, the sky rolling up like a scroll and receding is an enormous and terrifying sight which is completely outside any explanation offered by modern physics.
    - The impression of this heavenly phenomena is that the universe is coming apart, or that the sky is splitting.
4. I believe that God wants no misunderstanding on the source of these judgements and cosmic disasters. God desires HIS glory, and He wants for people to repent.
- a. I think this entire passage of **Revelation 6:12-17** is stating that God will open up the heavens for an instant, and the people on earth will be given a physical glimpse of God and the Lamb on their thrones (**Cf. Revelation 6:16**).
  - b. This is a picture of an extended scroll suddenly being split into two parts; the two sides of the scroll recoil, spring-like, around the end rods to which the scroll is attached.
  - c. Suddenly, and for a brief moment, the inhabitants of earth are permitted to peer into Heaven the same way Stephen was able to do when he was stoned to death in **Acts 7:56**.
  - d. Mankind will see Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb. This text makes it very clear they are able to visualize them.
  - e. That is why everyone described in **vs. 15** will know they are experiencing the wrath of God, and that is why they will know the great day of His wrath has come.
  - f. This knowledge will be terrifying to depraved humanity at that time, and it will even exceed the fear they have of the extreme natural catastrophes they will have endured.
  - g. Again, my conclusion here comes from a comprehensive study of this entire passage. It is always important to consider the context and related passages. That's a key part of responsible Biblical interpretation.
  - h. By the way, my view is shared by a few others. I am not alone in this conclusion, though there are not many of us that are willing to suggest this.
  - i. Most scholars simply default to an allegorical or symbolic explanation, and I think that is the easy and irresponsible way out.