

Session 5. Sixth Seal: Cosmic Disturbances and God's Glory (Rev. 6:12-17)

I. THE SIXTH SEAL: THE TURNING POINT IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION

He [Jesus] opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.¹³ And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.¹⁵ The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains,¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Rev. 6:12-17)

- A. The fifth seal judgment against the Antichrist is the increase of anointed intercession for justice fueled by the martyred saints in heaven. Jesus prophesied about the end-time prayer movement crying out for vengeance against the great injustice of the Antichrist's reign of terror (Lk. 18:8).
- B. This acceleration of the prayer movement brings a greater severity of judgment on the Antichrist. The fifth seal is the turning point in Revelation. God answers their prayer by releasing a new order of judgments, as seen in the sixth seal followed by the trumpets and bowls. The judgments are of a supernatural order, like the "heavenly arsenal" that Moses released on Pharaoh.
- C. Revelation 6:12-17 is a multifaceted prophecy with many implications bringing several prophecies together in the sixth seal (Isa. 2:10-22; Mic. 7:16-17; Hos. 9:12-14; 10:8; Mt. 24:19-22; Lk. 23:28-31). Each of these prophecies provides a key to better understand the sixth seal.

II. THE WICKED WILL HIDE FROM GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE END TIMES (ISA. 2; MIC. 7)

- A. Isaiah and Micah prophesied of men hiding in mountains from God's presence in the end times.
Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty ...¹² For the day of the LORD shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up ...¹⁹ They shall go into the ... caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. (Isa. 2:10-21)
The nations shall see and be ashamed of all their might ...¹⁷ They shall crawl from their holes like snakes of the earth. They shall be afraid of the LORD our God. (Mic. 7:16-17)
- B. Israel was terrified when the glory of God's presence appeared to them on the mountain.
The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai ...¹⁷ The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of ... Israel. (Ex. 24:16-18)
There were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain ... all the people who were in the camp trembled.¹⁷ Moses brought the people ... to meet with God ...¹⁸ Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. (Ex. 19:16-18)

- C. Daniel's friends fled in great terror from God's manifest presence.
For the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves ... ⁸ No strength remained in me. (Dan. 10:7-8)
- D. Paul and his friends saw the light and fell to the ground trembling because of God's presence.
A great light from heaven shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground ... ⁹ Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid. (Acts 22:6-9)
I saw a light ... brighter than the sun ... ¹⁴ We all had fallen to the ground. (Acts 26:13-14)
And when I [John] saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. (Rev. 1:17)
- E. Jesus prophesied of fearful signs in the sky in the sixth seal that occur just before His coming.
There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars ... ²⁶ men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming. (Lk. 21:25-26)
- F. Jesus opened the sixth seal in answer to the prayers of the martyrs in the fifth seal by releasing the spirit of glory on a global level (Isa. 40:5). Jesus releases His glory in context to persecution.
If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1 Pet. 4:14)
The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. (Isa. 40:5)

III. HIDING FROM THE TERROR OF GOD AND THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

The stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs ... ¹⁴ Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up ... ¹⁵ The kings of the earth, the great men ... and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and ... mountains, ¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!" (Rev. 6:13-17)

- A. **Sky:** the sky will recede (split, divide, move back) as a scroll. God will cause the sky to roll back, thus opening a window to see into heaven so that the worldwide leaders may witness it.
Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up. (Rev. 6:14)
- B. **Face:** they will cry out to be hidden from His face. We cry out to see His face. The martyrs cried, "Avenge us" and the wicked will cry, "Hide us."
- C. **Stars:** asteroids and meteor showers will hit the earth. The Greek word for stars used here is *aster*, from which we get the word "asteroid." An aster refers to any shining mass in the sky, including stars, comets, meteors, asteroids, or any flaming debris, etc.

- D. The diameter of the earth is nearly 8,000 miles. Our sun is a small star that is over 800,000 miles in diameter (100 times larger than the earth). One star hitting the earth would destroy it; thus, the kings would not flee to the mountains. The stars lost light in the fourth trumpet (Rev. 8:12).
- E. **Hide:** powerful world leaders are pictured as hiding both from God's face as well as the asteroids coming on the earth as an expression of Jesus' wrath. Isaiah prophesied of people hiding in the caves starting in the sixth seal (Isa. 2:10, 21, 19).
Enter into the rock, and hide ... from the terror ... and the glory of His majesty. (Isa. 2:10)
- F. A **meteoroid** is much smaller than an asteroid, ranging anywhere from a fraction of an inch to ten yards across and weighing a few grams (interplanetary dust) up to fifty tons (Hoba meteorite). Up to 50 meteorites hit the earth daily with 70% going in the ocean with another 25% occurring over uninhabited lands, leaving only one to ten each day that have the potential to be seen.
- G. An asteroid capable of global disaster would need to be over a quarter-mile wide. One that large would raise enough dust into the atmosphere to create a "nuclear winter."
- H. Meteoroids will bombard the earth, like a fig tree losing its figs when strong winds blow on it. John saw men hiding in caves to escape the debris falling from the sky as a part of the wrath of the Lamb. This intensifies later when 100-pound hailstones fall in the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:21).
Great hail ... fell on men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent [100 lbs]. (Rev. 16:21)
- I. **Said to the mountains:** many of these kings and great men will be worshipers of the Antichrist. In my opinion, their cry involves the occult (praying in the high places for protection, not death).
- J. As God guided David's stone to hit Goliath, so He will guide these stones (meteoroids) to stone the infrastructure of the Antichrist, who is the eschatological giant.
- K. This is not the second coming. At the end of the Armageddon campaign, they are emboldened to make war against Jesus instead of hiding from Him in the mountains (Rev. 19:17-21).
I saw the Beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. (Rev. 19:19)

IV. OTHER FACETS OF JESUS' WRATH IN THE SIXTH SEAL

- A. **Sun:** Jesus supernaturally causes this short-term darkness. It may also include natural events such as volcanic eruptions that leave particles in the air as ash, dust, and debris; a nuclear fallout; or a full eclipse, which occurs when something gets in between earth and the light of the sun.
- B. **Black:** the sun will be black as sackcloth. Sackcloth is the clothing of mourning because of coming judgment (Isa. 33:9). The prophets wore black and sackcloth when in mourning over sin and calling for repentance (Mt. 11:21; Lk 10:13; Rev. 11:3). The sun will wear the black garments of mourning. This is a parallel to the black horse in the third seal (Rev. 6:5).

- C. **Moon:** blood red speaks of death. The moon will wear the garments of blood. This is a parallel to the red horse in the second seal (Rev. 6:4). This supernatural event may include natural events like gases or a lunar eclipse that change the color of the moonlight to look red. A lunar eclipse occurs during a full moon when the earth gets in the way of the light of the sun.
- D. **Earthquake:** mentioned seven times in Revelation (Rev. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13 [2x], 19; 16:18 [2x]). Four times they are prophesied with the qualifying word “great” (Rev. 6:12; 11:13; 16:18 [2x]).
- E. **Mountains moved:** every mountain will be moved out of its place, which does not imply that they are all destroyed. No one would be able to hide in the mountains if they were all destroyed. The mountain and islands at this time are not annihilated, but moved. Some may move slightly and others may be destroyed. A mountain moving a foot brings much trouble. Some see this as focused on the Mediterranean area highlighted by Daniel (Dan. 7:2-3).
- F. There are five earthquakes prophesied in Revelation: at the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12), at the release of the trumpets (Rev. 8:5), at the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15, 19), when the two witnesses ascend (Rev. 11:13), and at the seventh bowl (Rev. 16:17-21), which is referred to as the most severe earthquake in history (Zech. 14:4-5; Isa. 2:19; 29:6; Hag. 2:6, 7).

V. THE RESPONSE OF UNBELIEVERS AT THE SIXTH SEAL

The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves ...¹⁶ and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the Throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!”¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:15-17)

- A. John describes those affected from seven categories of society. He emphasizes how leaders will respond: **kings** (presidents), **great men** (world leaders), **rich men** (financial leaders), **military commanders**, **mighty men** (civil leaders), **every slave and free man** (common class majority).
- B. Unbelievers will understand it is the Day of the Lord perceiving Jesus' wrath in these signs. John does not tell how they conclude this. The forerunners will proclaim the details of the sixth seal.
- C. **Day of His wrath:** For the great day of His wrath “*has come*”—the issue is whether the Day of the Lord has just begun or is soon to follow. The Greek verb “*has come*” can look backwards, indicating that the Day already arrived or it can look forward as something to occur soon. Robert Thomas explains that the verb *elthen* (“has come”) is aorist indicative, referring to a previous arrival of God's wrath.¹ The verb tenses in the hymns are future tenses (Rev. 11:18; 19:7).
- D. The **narrow** Day of the Lord is the 24-hour day Jesus enters Jerusalem. The **broad** Day of the Lord starts at the Tribulation and ends after the millennium. It lasts for 1,000 years (2 Pet. 3:8).

¹ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1992), 457.

VI. SIXTH SEAL: SIGNS IN THE SKY SPEAK OF THE HARVEST AND OUTPOURING

- A. The shaking of the heavens in the sixth seal is related to the nations coming to Jesus.

Thus says the LORD of hosts ... "I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire [Jesus] of all nations." (Hag. 2:6-7)

- B. The sixth seal events were prophesied by Joel in context to the outpouring of the Spirit before Jesus returns. I honor, but do not agree with those who equate the sixth seal with Jesus' coming.

I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy ... ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness ... before the coming of the great ... day of the Lord. (Joel 2:28-31)

Immediately after the tribulation of those days [first five seals] the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall ... ³⁰ Then ... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven [seventh trumpet] with power and great glory. (Mt. 24:29-30)

- C. **Summary:** the sixth seal describes God's glory being released in the context of martyrdom, resulting in the shaking of the nations, the outpouring of the Spirit, and the great harvest.

VII. THE WICKED CRY OUT FOR DEATH AND BARRENNESS IN JUDGMENT (HOS. 9-10)

- A. Hosea prophesied of judgments so severe that Israel would cry for a quick death to end the anguish (Hos. 10:8) and for barrenness (Hos 9:12-14) so their children would be spared anguish.

So Ephraim will bring out his children to the murderer. ¹⁴ Give them, O LORD—what will You give? Give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts! (Hos 9:13-14)

The sin of Israel shall be destroyed. The thorn and thistle shall grow on their altars; they shall say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall on us!" (Hos. 10:8)

- B. Thorn and thistles grew on Israel's altars because they were used for idol worship. This speaks of Israel's destruction when all the people were taken captive by the invading Assyrians in 722 BC.

VIII. CRYING OUT FOR DEATH AND BARRENNESS (LK. 23:28-31)

- A. Jesus applied two aspects of Hosea's prophecy (Hos. 9:14; 10:8: crying for death and barrenness) to the time of Jerusalem's judgment in AD 70 (Lk. 23:29-31) and in the Tribulation (Mt. 24:19).

Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' ³⁰ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' ³¹ For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" (Lk. 23:28-31)

- B. The destruction of Jerusalem is presented using two proverbial sayings concerning anguish in being childless and in facing such destruction that many would rather die than live through it. This prophecy was partially fulfilled in AD 70. Its fullness occurs in the Tribulation.

- C. In the sixth seal, some hide to be protected from death and others are overwhelmed with despair. Both the “death wish” of Hosea 10:8 and the desire for safety of Isaiah 2:10 will be present.
- D. Jesus called the women to weep for their children and Jerusalem in light of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem that He prophesied (Lk. 13:34-35; 19:41-44; 21:20-24). Their tears would not change God’s plan concerning Jesus’ death, but could change what happens in them.
- E. Joel prescribed weeping in repentance and intercession as part of God’s way to change the course of events. God is willing to relent, or to cancel judgment if His people cry out.
“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.”¹³ So rend your heart ... for He is gracious and merciful ... and He relents from doing harm.
(Joel 2:12-13)
- F. Jesus applied this to the women of Jerusalem in the end times. Children are God’s blessing. However, childlessness will be a blessing to those in Jerusalem in the final 3½ years.
Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!²⁰ Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. (Mt. 24:15-20)
- G. In verse 30, they will just begin to speak with despair at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This will reach a far more intense level during the Great Tribulation.
Then they will begin to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”³¹ For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry? (Lk. 23:30-31)
- H. Jesus prophesied about the unprecedented judgment of Jerusalem by using a proverbial saying (v. 31). The obvious principle is that fire destroys trees, yet its destructiveness varies depending on the condition of the tree. When the wood is dry, the fire is more destructive. When the wood is green, the fire is not as fierce. A dry tree is more quickly and easily set on fire. The proverb relates to fire burning with greater intensity at the later time when the conditions are worse.
- I. The green and dry trees are parallel with Jerusalem being set on fire in different hours of history. This proverb is given to explain the exhortation to weep in intercession for Jerusalem because of the fire of destruction that will come on her in varying intensity. “They” refers to wicked men (Jews and Romans). Wicked men set a fire by betraying Jesus, then by worshiping the Antichrist.
- J. ***Two applications of Jesus’ general principle***: The time of the green wood is when sin has not yet ripened in the global and historical sense (as it will under the Antichrist). If God allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem, what will He allow when all nations worship the Antichrist? ***Near fulfillment***: The “green tree” represented that hour in which civil unrest was caused by Jesus’ good ministry. What did the “dry tree” season bring after the nation put Him to death? It brought fierce judgment on Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. ***Distant fulfillment***: the “green tree” season of history may be represented by the oppression of Israel and other nations by Rome in the first century before the guilt of the nations had fully ripened. What will the “dry tree” season be like after all the nations worship the Antichrist?