

"GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH"

Rev. 6

INTRODUCTION:

For our text, we will use the last part of the 17th verse - of a great day of his wrath is come; and who is able to stand?

Now the main action of the book of Revelations begins with this vision. The remainder of the book of Revelations, is an explanation of the seals. Of the little book of destiny. The seal was a sign of ownership. And only an official representative could open one's seal.

This is not a beautiful picture - but we have John giving us the opportunity to see what is going to come before the end. The action of the book of Revelation really begins here. And our goal is in the Redeemer, in the hands of Almighty God.

We have seen the picture of the throne in Heaven, of the elders seated around, and finally - discovering the one who is worthy to take the book - forfeited inheritance. Out of the hand of the one on the throne. Now this has brought light to us, but this book or roll is sealed up with seven seals. Now the seven seals include the whole proceedings of Almighty God in this universe, in the earth. Until the time that He comes back again to reign. When everything is finished. And most people, and most commentaries agree on the points of all the interpretations that we have in the book of Revelation - up until this point. Now, one of the major problems is to decide when it happened. Whether it was in the past, the

present, or whether it was going to happen in the future. And John's prophecy is a prophecy that we cannot force into some chronological framework. It really is difficult to try to do this - because you will be working out all kinds of tables and charts if you try to do this.

Now secondly, the big problem as I see this is, that the movements of what is recorded have been happening, and taking place from the earth, to the Heavenly place. And we always think of Heaven as being "up there". And this vision goes to Heaven - and we think of things in terms of the earth. And John is going to give us truth. A truth does not vary whether it is in time, it will always be true. So Heaven is not just a place, it is a condition of where God is. And there is some experience in this which John spoke about.

Now he talked about the condition within the churches. And he has had the vision that God is the Creator and Redeemer. And now in the series of events which follow, the successive openings of the seven seals are the scroll that the lamb took out of the right hand of God.

They happened in history and they will happen anytime. And the breaking of each seal, means of divine judgement. This is the way that God deals with rebellious people.

They were subject to God, and as the seals are broken, the writer does not read anything. But it seems that (events) take place when he opens the seal. When he breaks a seal, something is translated into action. Out comes a horse and a rider. And these horsemen control the earth. And they have powers as they come

forward.

In V. 1 - He watches as the lamb opens the first seal. And one of the four living ones said, (come.) Now in our Bibles it says, "Come and see." Now in the best translations, they tell us that in the Greek manuscript there is no and-see but simply come. Now the invitation is not just for John to come up and look - he is already looking. It is the summons of the four horses and their riders. One by one they come forth on the stage of history. And the (cherubim) is saying, come.

I. THE FIRST SEAL

V. 2 - We read about the opening and a (white horse) coming forth. I want you to notice in Zach. 6:1-8 - this was the origin of this vision. Where that man of God saw four horses let loose on the earth to deal out vengeance to Babylon and to Egypt. These four Spirits of the Heavens come forth and stand for four mighty winds that God is about to let loose. To blast the world with destruction.

Now, remember the four horses and their riders (stand) for four great destructive forces. And they are pictures of events (which could) actually be happening in the world which John knew. And in which John lived in.

As each seal was broken and opened - a new terror falls upon the earth.

The first was a white horse. And a rider.

It would be almost impossible for us to realize the awe and the reverence.

As they look upon the strength of a horse. In Job 39:19-25, there is a magnificent tribute to the strength and the power of a horse. Similar in Zach. 6:1-7. They were used for conquest. And to march in the battle. And these four horses proceed across the stage with the noise of thunder. Here is a white horse, a charger, a sign of conquest, of victory. And he that sat on this horse had a bow, and he had a crown.

① The first horse was one of a victor. In ancient processions, the triumphant one marched at the head. And scholars and students have tried to identify the rider of this horse in several different ways. Many will tell you that this is Christ, that here is the Lord Jesus, the line of the tribe of Juda, and he pulls aside the curtain in order that he might see judgement. And he is on a white horse.

That he is victorious - he is faithful, he is true, and he is crowned. And he is a conquerer and he parades victoriously. And the hand with a bow in it, is a sign of his great power, to defeat the enemy. That God will break the enemy at the last.

Now the color of the horse would suggest Heavenly purity. Brown would suggest royalty. The bow represents overcoming his enemies and the victorious march is for God and his foes have been defeated. Now there are those who say there are many things against such an interpretation. They say, this is a rather crude picture of Christ as the lamb. That it should be a different type of a picture for Jesus Christ.

② Now there are others who believe, that this white horse represents the anti-Christ.

That here is a picture at the end of time as in Matt. 24 - which outlines and corresponds with some of the visions in Revelation. That here is the one who is coming like Hitler, or like Stalin, or like Tojo - or some man of sin that will deceive many. He will be self-styled. And he will come as a false Christ, or a false Messiah. And that he will be the identified one on this horse. And they give sketches of this man of sin who comes and he takes this place. Now, we remember that the word "anti-Christ" is only used by John - I John 2:18, 22. 4:3, II John 7. The word is used to describe a corrupt power. A hostile influence, a counterfeit against the work of Christ, one who opposes Christ. Now the fact that many anti-Christ have come forth - and may resemble.

There are many reasons for holding this - that here is a white horse. And that symbolizes an anti-Christ. Because he is representing the righteous man.

3) Gospel dispensation - How, a symbol of his advancing Power, to Romans a white horse sign of victory.

II. THE SECOND SEAL

V. 3 - And John watched the lamb open the second seal. And the living creature says come. At his summons, a man on a red horse rode across the stage. Now let the color of his horse identify - his horse is red. "He has come to take peace from the earth." And cause men to slay one another. He carries a great sword which adds to all of the other details. Which identifies him with war. And this rider takes away that wonderful thing that we know as peace. He represents discord and war. Matt. 10:34. And so here is the emblem of this rider who comes forth. How well John had known about Herod the Great. For thirty years before, he had been tearing the world apart. In which no fewer than 100,000 men had perished in the revolution. This horse is one of strife. And brother was fighting against brother. What a tragic thing that they go forth to murder and kill, and slay.

III. THE THIRD SEAL

V. 5, 6 - Which the lamb opens and breaks. And there is a voice that cries. And there comes forth a black horse. And this rider represents famine. And hardship. There were three main crops in Palestine - corn, wine, and oil. And this rider comes across the scene. With a pair of balances in his hand - to measure out food. To eat bread by weight, tells us there was great lack of food. It was entirely an abnormal situation. And that it would cost a days wages to buy just three measures of barley. Now, we know that instead of corn, a man bought barley - and that was not the best, for his family. But, he is painting these terms that actually become situations before the end of time.

Think of Nero in that time, when men thought that a ship load of corn was arriving in Italy, from Alexandria, and they discovered that it was a special kind of sand from the Nile River that was going to be spread on the ground and in the arena for the gladiator show. And the people staged a riot.

Domitian created a shortage of grain - by not planting anymore vineyards and by cutting down some of the old ones. And not allowing them to cultivate what they had. And so there was a picture of famine. Starvation. The wages of a working man - a whole hard day's work, he was able to win just enough for one man - for himself. Besides the needs of his household and his family.

IV. THE FOURTH SEAL

In which a pale horse comes across - V. 7, 8. Now this is the horse that is pale - that means death. Now this is something, for every man to face the grave.

The Glory of God is not under the ground -- the Glory of God is in Heaven. God's people have their home there. Destiny is beyond. For God's people there is a glory and a light. Now evil was running wild. And he says here, that here is not only the sword, and famine, but here is another penalty -- there is coming death - and it rides through the land. In war time, food became scarce. It was weighed out to the families. The necessities of life were high. Wheat sold for \$6.40 a bushel. Barley for \$2.00 a bushel. And a measure of wheat was the usual ration for a day, for a day's work. In war time - it cost 12 times its normal price. And so with hunger going through the land - now we have death. This fourth seal, this pale horse, as he rode across, there was death. The judgement is only partial - by death, with the grave - just ready to take greedy bodies within it.

V. THE FIFTH SEAL

V. 9 - 11 - Now this - when it comes to opening this seal, we find that the scene sort of shifts from earth to Heaven. To the courts of the temple. For here is something very new that we are coming to in V. 9. When the lamb opens the fifth seal, the whole thing changes. The point we have observed, the meaning of judgement, we now see before us the reason for judgement.

Underneath the altar, John sees the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God. The testimony which they held.

Now these martyrs can be those who were slain by Domitian. And his persecution. Here they cry out, that their blood be avenged.

Critics have said, that this is a non-Christian attitude and they have wanted

to reject the book of Revelation from the New Testament cannon, because of this.

V 10
They over-looked the fact that wrath against sin is an essential part of the righteousness of God. That really this passage reflects the moral necessity for judgement. God could not be a righteous God and allow such evil to go so unavenged. So the chief reason for God's judgement, say on the Roman Empire. Their persecution of God's people. And the only non-Christian attitude reflected here is the impatience, of these martyrs. Of these martyr saints. We read how that these martyrs in V. 10 cried out in a loud voice, "how long oh Lord." There is a picture that here was a direct sacrifice that had taken place. And they are beneath the altar. You remember that Paul said, he rejoiced. That he was ready to be sacrificed and offered up. 2 Tim. 4:6.

When a good man dies for the sake of goodness - it may look like a tragedy and a disaster. And we may say, what a waste. But it may be more added up. When we add it all up together. So the judgement of God upon these world dictators and the Judgement Day is on the way.

V. 9 - These men cry out. For the day of vengeance. All of this book, all of these seals, is a final judgement upon the earth.

John ~~ceased~~ them under the altar - the souls that had been slain.

These men cry unto God - they are a special group. They have been faithful even unto death.

Rom. 12:1 - that here is maybe where John got his idea. Paul says, "offer you life, a living sacrifice on the altar of God." And in the passage of 2 Tim. 4:6 - for I am ready to be offered. The way God beholds all of his children to pour out their lives unto him. In that degree of devotion that we are to pour our lives out to Him.

There was a young man who wanted to be a missionary, to the jungles of Africa. They warned him against it - but the man said, on every bridge - underneath, there are foundations of stones that support it. And there are lives that are unknown, and are sacrificed unto God. And he says, if I am going to be one of those stones buried in the earth - says I am called to go and I will go. So he went. He did not live long. But he was a part of God's will.

Now John said, "I saw these souls under the altar." Underneath the altar. Lev. - the blood is poured out at the base of the altar. And in keeping with that symbolism, the word of God rests there - protecting and sheltering these martyrs.

Why were these martyrs slain? the terrible slaughter of sacrifice. That is the word that describes them. To the world they were destroyed - but to God, they were offered. Why were they slain - they were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. The truth of God always brings opposition. Many times it brings destruction to those who deliver it. They were slain for the word of God and the testimony they held.

Because of the word of God, and because of the testimony in Jesus Christ, they were slain. They were living in days when the judgement of God was going to fall.

Just as today, we must remember what these men went through. We must remember the agony, the flames, the arena, the wild beasts, the torture that they suffered. Martyrs must rest in peace, a little longer - until the number is made up.

Just as today, things are happening here in our own country. The nation seems to be building up for the judgement of God. These things of the world are not just happen so's. If the days come that bombs reign upon the cities of our country, the worldly man will say - it just happened. But the prophet will tell you that this is a visitation of God. This is what God is able to do. Now we know that the power and the might of our country, but how on earth were a few helicopters defeated down on that desert in Iran. Now, many years ago, there was the Devil at work. And the wrath and the judgement of God was to come. While we today speak of God's love - and we talk about things that are pretty and beautiful. But this book tells us that God is good, and it also tells us about some bad things that are going to happen.

The observation is that unless we repent and get right with God, and unless we turn, there is coming down upon us the judgement and the visitation of Almighty God. For example, Samuel, as a boy - the first message that he delivered to the house of Eli was that of destruction and rebuke. Isaiah delivered a message concerning the sins of Juda and the people would carry to Babylon - that they should be destroyed. Jeremiah came to preach and he was put in stocks, and chains, and in a pit. People did not like to hear what he preached. And they do not like it today. We need, they say, to teach our children, the positive side and never the negative.

Did you know all the Ten Commandments are - Thou shalt not. When we get smarter than God, we are going to raise up a generation of children that are on the road of judgement. We cannot escape it - it is God who put this world together. And the Lord did it with a whole lot of "Thou shalt nots". Yet, we teach our children, not

this - but something else. Give the little children something that will not make them inferior. And soon we have a new generation - a new family - and rebellion of juveniles. Beyond anything this world has ever known.

Jonah entered the city and said - 40 days and it will be destroyed. He was talking about the coming of God's judgement. Now we have Jesus talking about wars and rumors of wars. And earthquakes. And things happening. And Paul wrote about this in 2 Timothy - he told about these and about greivous wolves that would come . Into the flock of God.

V. 10 - They cried unto the Lord, the soverign ruler. The Great Messiah - each one was given a magnificent thing. He was given a white robe. This was a pledge of the resurrection.

We sometimes wonder about this - and yet, here it is in our fathers and mothers, and in our grandparents, and all the way back to Adam. This is where evil comes from. And everytime we stand by a grave, it is because of sin. That is why we have the revelation - he is going to bring a new kingdom and a new earth about.

Death is not the end of life - but rather it is the existence beyond the grave. Whether one be saved or unsaved - righeous or unrighteous. Good or bad. The soul lives beyond death. Rich man, the beggar man both died. The rich man died and was honored. The poor man did not even have a burial in the potter's field. But more of the story is that in Hades the rich man lifted up his eyes - being in torment. And Lazarus was being ministered unto.

X Men laughed at Noah in his day, when he talked about the judgement. Are you one of them. Have you done that. Have you asked Jesus to forgive you of your sins. If you were to die today, is it right between you and God.

There are many things that would take place. First, you would be immediately in Paradise with Him. Just as the man in Luke 23:29. What a beautiful place that must be.

Another ²thing, what is it for the Christian to die - it is to be with our Lord. It is as Paul said, absent from the body, present with the Lord. 2 Cor. 5:8. When one dies, he believes that he immediately goes to be with Christ.

And ³another thing, about the saved person is, they rest in blessedness. They will continue to rest and not wander about as ghosts - but they will be at home with their Lord.

There is no such thing as the Word of God saying the soul sleeps. That is, that when it dies, it goes to our Lord in Heaven.

Another thing, there is no such thing as purgatory. When it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this judgement. And so when we close our eyes to this world, we will open them in Heaven. And at the end of this life, after death, there is no second chance. Death fixes it all - as the tree falls, so it lies. There is a great gulf fixed between the lost and the saved. And there is also hope for the resurrection of the body. When death is going to be swallowed up in victory, when the early century Christians. And we need not rob men of that blessed hope that they are going to have

in that day.

VI. THE SIXTH SEAL

V. 12-17 - When the sixth seal was opened, John saw a great earthquake. With all the horror.

The sun was turned to darkness and the moon was blood-red. The stars fell like figs before a great wind. The Heavens rolled up like a scroll of paper. The mountains and the islands disappeared. People of every class and condition hid themselves in caves. They cried for the mountains to fall upon them and to hide them from the wrath of the one that was on the throne. The swift agony of being crushed to death by the anger of God.

There are those who hold that this does not represent the final judgement but only a temporal judgement, by natural calamity. As a representative case of natural calamity - the earth quake is used. They were frequent in this country.

And there are those who hold a view that this is the evident fact, of the final judgement and does not appear to Rev. 20:11-15. There are those who hold that this is the final judgement. This is the story here - of the literal fulfillment when the day of the final overthrow of the enemy, in that great day of wrath - when it says who is able to stand. That is an indication of the last judgement.

There are good arguments on both sides of this question. And it is difficult to

choose the one and reject the other. But ours simply would be toward the one covering the field of activity here - that it must be something about the final judgement. Even Moffett said, it is the beginning of the final judgement that is taking place in the closing part of this chapter. John said the sun became black. And fell upon our human sin. There was darkness on the face of the earth from high noon to three in the afternoon. A blackness of night. The moon became blood. Appeared like blood. Matt. 24:29 and Joel 2:31. The stars fell from Heaven. A mighty wind, so God's creation was shaken. What a day, we would say.

What do these signs mean. Matt. 24 - these things he describes as the beginning of sorrows. He speaks of famine, war, earth quake and darkness. And the breaking up of civilization. And can we imagine all of these things that are taking place here. Look at V. 15 - what does those who live on earth do in the great day of judgement. The Bible says they are terrified. The kings, great men, rich men, chief captains, mighty men, bondman, all are terrified.

They hide themselves in dens and in rocks. They are frightened. The disaster is coming from God. So they say to God, who is on his throne. Do something about this. They say sin is reality. As we look at it now. And God is coming down. For the great day of wrath of the lamb has come. What a phrase and what a text.

For a lamb that is so humble and so gentle. And now in this great day of the wrath of the lamb is come. The Lord is good and gracious to those who love him. But God, the lamb, who died for our sins, now is coming to bring destruction. Vengeance is mine, and I will repay say the Lord, and again - the Lord will judge the people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

V.16

V. 16 - This is a strange thing that happens, people are called together in a prayer meeting. Every big man there, every small man, every famous man, every wise man, every foolish man, every leader - every captain is there, and they call upon the name of the Lord trying to pray to him. No, they are not praying to God, they are praying to the dumb rocks and beseeching the stones to come down and to hide them. Isn't that the most amazing thing. There is the earth quake - and the earth is shaking. God is going to shake the Heavens. John saw this vision when things were moving. And he saw the darkness of the sun and the moon. Terrifying darkness. He saw the stars falling from the Heavens. And this was proof - that the guarantee of God was about over. Now you could rely on the Heavens, but now they were in chaos.

There was a folding up of the heavens - what a picture. Just like a roll stretched out in a man's hand. Suddenly split down the middle, half of it recoils and rolls up as paper. God is shaking the earth.

V.14

V. 14 - It says that the hills, the islands of the sea, and the mountains moved. And they were shaking.

No man was exempt from this judgement of God. Not even the Roman governors.

This is a vision when the day of the Lord comes - and John sees it. And people will be seeking somewhere to hide. Here is a great truth - that the first instinct of sin is to hide it. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve, sought to hide themselves.

Now we notice the last thing - that from which man flee is the wrath of the lamb.

Now normally he stands for kindness. He stands for destruction. And this is strange.

Why do we not turn to God - because judgement does not save men. It never does.

Only the grace of God can change a human heart. Why is that you say no to God. It happens in your soul, every time you say no to God. To the invitation of the spirit of God, something happens in your heart. Then, condemned men, under this sixth seal prayed not to God to save them, but for the rocks to hide them.

I want to say to you, thank God there is a rock - the rock of ages. Opened for me, torn asunder for me, crucified for me, rent for me, let me hide myself in Thee. "Oh my loving brother when the world is on fire, don't you want God's bosom to be your pillow. Oh hide me ever in the rock of ages. Rock of ages, cleft for me." There is a refuge, there is a peace in this - as the artist painted a picture on the side of a rock. There was a bird that had a nest high in the cleft, fast asleep, with its head under its wing. Peace, peace, rest, security in the cleft of the rock.

No wonder the hymn writer wrote - Jesus lover of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly, while the narrow waters roll, while the tempest still is hide. Hide me oh my Saviour hide, til the storm of life is past, rock of ages, cleft for me - let me hide myself in thee. "There is a rock in a weary land."

Now this is not something that will just be any time. All have sinned and

come short of the glory of God.

But this is the picture of the end - and it can be true. At the end of the world.