



The Opening of the Earth

Revelation 6:9-17



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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What would you be willing to die for?

The first four seals opening leave a minor doubt in the world that the hand of God is not actively at work. Yet, with the 5th and 6th seal's being broken, all doubt is removed. A time is coming when the world will run out of excuses to deny the hand of God. The core of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is Gospel centric. The Lamb of God, while pouring out His wrath upon the world, is returning all things to himself. Every step of God's intervention has been a heavenly invasion to rend a rebellious people from the clutches of sin and death and return them to the fullness of God. For some, this will mean entering into the fullness of God's glory. For others, they will enter into the fullness of God's wrath. While they may know who is pursuing and calling them, their unwillingness to return to Christ will result in the fullness of God's wrath poured out on them. The 5th and 6th seals represent those who gave the ultimate price for their faith, the martyrs, and those who would not bow before the Lord.

The Return of the Martyrs

With the fifth seal, John paints a picture of the first sign of redemption. Previously, the seals brought about death, war, chaos, and other forms of punishment. Yet, the seven seals are not merely punishments for the sins of mankind but they are judgments poured out on the earth. For the martyrs and those whose blood was shed for the sake of the Gospel, the pronouncement of judgment awakens them back to life. The Lamb of God judges the martyrs, for their suffering and paying the ultimate price, and redeems them first. The act of the Christian is to spiritual do what the martyrs have done physically; giving ourselves fully to Lord. The more we understand the depth and greatness of God, the more we understand that nothing has the strength to overpower the God inside of us. Death is not the end for those in Jesus Christ. Nor is death any form of punishment or threat as it only brings to the face of God sooner.

The reaction of the martyrs to their redemption reveals an eagerness for the fullness of redemption. The martyrs cry for the finality of the judgment to be poured out on the world. Yet, you get the sense that they do so in eagerness of God's presence. Things are now coming to their final conclusion. Heaven and earth are colliding in the divine rescue mission. The saints are being returned. God gives them rest from the anguish of their martyrdom, waiting for the final number of martyrs to reach their conclusion. No matter what difficulties the people of God may face, we face them in the unity of the full family of God. The saints who have come before us and found our rest pray on our behalf. The same God that empowered His people to stare death in the face without fear resides in us as well. They have come before us in order that we may go after them.

The Ripping Open of Earth

The opening of the sixth seal is met with natural disasters and unnatural disasters. Some, like earthquakes, we have experienced a taste of in our current world, though the magnitude will undoubtedly increase. Other, like the sun darkening and the vanishing of the sky will not have been experienced before. The presence of God on the earth, with each breaking of each seal, grows stronger as the judgment is poured out on the world. Earth in its sinful state cannot sustain the fullness of God's presence. Just as heaven could barely contain fullness of God's presence even in the throne room of God, with the fullness of God returning to the earth, the very physical presence cannot sustain the fullness of the glory of God.

Still, when the fullness of God is being poured out, the people of the world refuse to come to Him. At a time, the testimony of nature and the world will leave no doubt that God is pouring out His judgment on the earth. Furthermore, that judgment will extend to all people, making no distinction between their race, status, creed, background, gender, or any other distinction. God views all as equally deserving of the judgment with some finding their identity in Jesus Christ. Some, however, will choose death rather than salvation. While this may seem to be incomprehen-

sible, this demonstrates the state of our heart. Even after our coming to Christ, we continue to return to the same sin time and time again. We refuse the truth and grace of God for the lie of the sin our hearts crave. Yet, like the world, our lives in its sinful state cannot sustain the fullness of the presence of God. This is precisely Christ creates new so that we can reside with Him in eternity, giving up our past for the eternal glory of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions

- Describe the reaction of the martyrs to being awakened from death? What does this reveal about the people of God? What things are they craving to see fulfilled? Why do you think that is?
- What rewards does God provide for those who have completely given their life for the sake of the Gospel? How does this bless the people?
- Where do you see conflict between the things of the world and the things of God in this passage?
- Do you understand the actions of the people after understanding and experiencing the presence of God? Why or why not? Compare their reaction to the reaction of the martyrs?
- Why do people continue in their sin once they experience the presence of God? What hope does God offer to the world struggling through this?
- How does it feel to know that you may lose your life for the sake of the Gospel? What difference is there between the martyrs and you as far as faith is concerned?
- Revelation 6:9-17 presents two pictures. One is of those who gave everything for the sake of God and those who have nothing. How does this display the nature and character of God? How does God's nature and character encourage us as we seek to give up of ourselves entirely?