

Revelation 6

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[0 : 00] Again, the scripture reading is Revelation chapter 6 on page 1031 in your Blue Bibles. Please stand for the reading of God's Word.

Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a loud voice like thunder, come, and I looked, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering and to conquer.

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, come, and out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, come, and I looked, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, a quart of wheat for denarius, and three quarts of barley for denarius, and do not harm the oil and the wine.

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, come, and I looked, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him, and they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

[1 : 43] When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

Then they were given a white robe and told to rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

When he opened the sixth seal, I look, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.

For the great day of their wrath has come. Who can stand? This is the word of the Lord. Amen. Be to God. You may be seated. Good afternoon.

[3 : 18] Shall we pray? Lord, we give thanks this afternoon for your goodness to us and for the sacred honor of being in your presence and to be able to proclaim the word of God.

I do pray that the words of my mouth, the thoughts of my mind, the meditations of my heart would be acceptable before you.

May this offering be pleasing to you and a refreshment to the saints here today. We pray these things in Christ's name.

Amen. We come to Revelation chapter 6 this afternoon. And as we look there on the pages of scripture, one thing becomes noticeably clear.

The scene has changed from Revelation chapters 4 and 5, where we were in the throne room of God. The scene shifts from the unspeakable beauty and glories of heaven to the stark realities of life in a fallen world.

[4 : 35] In Revelation chapter 6, we see the beginning of the judgments that will prepare the earth for the glorious scenes that we see in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.

We notice that the throne of God from above shifts to the throne of God on the earth. The throne of God and the Lamb being in the context of this earth.

It has been purged, the earth that is, from the anti-God forces and anti-God people with anti-God agendas. So the dwelling of God, the tabernacle of God is then with man.

Look with me. Revelation chapter 21. Verses 3 and 4. And then Revelation chapter 22 and verse 3.

You'll find that on pages 10, 41, and 42 in the Blue Bibles that are there for you. What a marvelous chapter this is.

[5 : 51] And this is one of the glorious things about preaching is that you don't have any options of skipping over certain chapters. You have to do the hard work of exegesis and come up with what God is saying through the text of Scripture.

But look there with me, that passage. Revelation 21, verses 3 and 4. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man.

And he will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God. And notice the impact of the presence of God in the midst of his people.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more. Neither shall there be mourning or crying nor pain anymore for the former things are passed away.

Look particularly at chapter 22, verse 3. No longer will there be anything accursed. But, and here it is, the throne of God and the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him.

[7 : 09] Revelation chapters 4 and 5 are a prelude to the judgments of God that will redeem the earth that we see in chapters 6 through 19.

And just before showing John the forces that will be released in the world, John saw this vision for chapters 4 and 5, an eternal God, an eternal, holy, sovereign God, the worthy one who rules from his throne and that was going to reclaim the earth as it were for his own.

Just think if you were a recipient of this prophetic letter back in first century AD. The assurance that in spite of the things that would be going on on earth, that there was a God that ruled in heaven.

That reality provided assurance for them then. And friends, it should provide assurance and comfort and hope for us today.

That in spite of the things that we see with our eyes and feel in our hearts and even in our bodies, the stressors of life that you and I face and feel living in a fallen world to know.

[8 : 33] I mean, it's like a snapshot that you maybe keep in place that you look at every now and then. I remember when I was in the army in Germany, I had a picture of my beloved on my locker.

She was not there, but her picture was a reminder of the reality that she was and that she loved me.

So, the people of Christian faith today benefit similarly as the Holy Spirit makes real the things of Christ to you and me today.

Those marvelous unseen realities that we behold in the Word of God. And the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and makes them real to you and me.

Spirit-inspired images like these must be fresh in our hearts today as you and I march through this world to that time where the kingdoms of this world will in fact become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

[9 : 38] And so today in this chapter that's before us, we see three different things. We see signs in verses 1 through 8.

We hear sighs in verses 9 through 11. And then, once again, we see signs again in verses 12 through 17.

And I want you to look with me because in verses 1 through 8 particularly, we get to see the signs of this age. This age that we're living in.

This age between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ. There are particular signs that help us to see that God, in fact, is the Lord over all and will, in fact, redeem this world and this earth for Himself.

So in Revelation chapter 6, the worthy Lamb begins to open these seven seals that secured the content of the scroll. Six of these seals are broken in this chapter.

[10 : 49] Notice in verse 12, He opened the sixth seal. And then, as you look over in chapter 8, we see there it was that the seventh seal is broken.

And next week's message on chapter 7 amounts to an interlude between the sixth and the seventh seal. If you will look forward in Revelation, you will see a similar interlude between the sixth and the seventh trumpet.

That's there. But one by one, the Lamb opens these seals. And the first four are distinguished in that the four living creatures, these angelic attendants around the throne of God representing all nature before God.

They play a role in the opening of these seals, these first four seals. What we seem to have here are dispatches from heaven.

Horses and riders are beckoned to come forth. And they are distinct both in their color as well as in the assignments that they were given.

[12 : 06] Notice the colors. In chapter 6 and verse 2, one of the horses was white. Then in chapter 6, verse 4, you notice that the horse is a bright red in color.

Black in chapter, verse 5, and this ashen green pale corpse-like color is seen in verse 8.

And what we see here is these things are absolutely awful in a sense as we look and see what it is that these forces have been dispatched in the earth to do.

These are horses. one of the highlights of my summers as a kid was going to the zoo. There in Kansas City, it's a zoo called Swope Park Zoo.

Swope Park and then there's the zoo. And one of the things that we really looked forward to was riding on those ponies there. I remember every year I was looking forward to ride Spot.

[13 : 19] Spot was this tame little pony that went the route. They ran around the circle and came back. They had a particular path that these horses would go but as a kid of course that was fun to do that.

Well if you were to name these horses here it would be no tame name that you would give them. These are the agents of God's judgment that he is sending forth into the earth.

They are here we have what's known as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. And these are heaven sent emissaries.

And these images of these agents sent forth by God into the earth these are not new to scripture. As a matter of fact several of Zachariah's apocalyptic like visions included similar God appointed first forces.

Turn with me to Zachariah chapter 1 verses 8 through 10. Zachariah chapter 1 that's on 793 in your Bible.

[14 : 35] We see again these similar God appointed emissaries that were sent forth. This is how it reads I saw in the night and behold a man riding on a red horse.

He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen and behind him were red sorrel or brownish colored and white horses. Then I said what are these my Lord?

The angel who talked with me said to me I will show you what they are. So the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered these are they whom the Lord has sent to patrol look at chapter 6 verses 1 through 8 page 795 similarly you see these God appointed agents that are sent forth on you might say God assignments in the earth chapter 6 verse 1 again I lifted my eyes and saw and behold four chariots came out from between two mountains and the mountains were mountains of bronze the first chariot had red horses the second black horses the third white horses and the fourth chariot dappled horses all of them strong then I answered and said to the angel talk with me what are these my lord the angel answered and said to me these are going out of the four winds of heaven after presenting themselves before the lord of all the earth and on and on again it said and you see in they go out so they patrol the earth the end of verse 7 in

Zachariah the horses and chariots with colored horses are sent in various directions to do the various biddings of the lord of the whole earth back to revelation here similarly horses and riders are dispatched from heaven to do god's will again these figures of these forces that are going out to accomplish god's will these are agents on a mission one of the ways of viewing these four horsemen these are agents of divine discipline each is a form of earthly calamity!

This is clearly seen as we look at the riders in verses 2 through 4 look at the second rider what he was dispatched to do he takes peace from the earth in verse 4 resulting in slaughter and bloodshed the rider on the black horse in verses 5 and 6 has a pair of scales balances these this common measuring instrument there and the scene is one of scarcity and famine and inflation where it takes a lot to buy a little you know anything about that these days fourth rider verses 7 and 8 is clearly identified as death and the grave or Hades follow they were given authority over one fourth of the earth to kill through the agency of four different forces and notice what those forces are the sword famine pestilence and wild beasts now these forces these same forces exact same forces were used as

[17 : 58] God's instruments of destruction in the past you don't have to turn to it but this is what Ezekiel chapter 14 and verse 21 says for thus says the Lord God how much more when I send upon Jerusalem my four disastrous acts of judgment sword famine wild beast and pestilence to cut off from it man and beast with these things in mind it seems best to view the first rider in the same vein also as an instrument of divine judgment several interpretations!

are offered as far as to the identity of this particular rider some because of what we see in Revelation chapter 19 verse 11 where Christ is coming on a white horse with many crowns some would say that this is Christ that seems to be not to be the case because number one Christ is opening the seals number two this is an inferior being sort of sending out Christ again that doesn't make sense beckoning him to come again that just doesn't seem to ring true others see that this is an imitation of Christ or the anti Christ others see it as the advance of the gospel throughout this particular age while some of these interpretations they have things to commend them it seems best to see that this is writer is depicting conquest conquest in the earth white horses symbolic of victory of the bow is symbolic of war if each of these horse are considered forces of man's destruction or forms of earthly calamities this could be a benign conquest or perhaps even a blatant conquest but this is certainly one of the instruments that bring these agents of earthly calamities that we see here consistent with what we see of the other riders on their horses here's a question isn't the desire for conquest bound up in the hearts of individuals and nations you better believe it there's this desire to conquer and to strut our stuff whether we're talking about militarily or economically the desire of both weak and strong is to conquer and sometimes it's even in the name of freedom that we go about to conquer and exercise rule of others it's the desire to spread our way of life

I think of as I have observed and heard from my African friends about the divvying up of the African nations around about the turn of the century turn of the 20th century where the European nations went in and just sort of divided up the continent the European nations and as we have gone to Mozambique when my daughter was there and just to see the ravages of colonialism and after that comes in communism and each sort of rakes over the land and then oftentimes there is civil war that follows and as you look there you got a country that has a very little solid infrastructure the people are in deep deep need four kinds of earthly calamities conquests war famine and death released by reason of the lambs opening up the seals and did you know that these kinds of forces are universal they were present in first century world and they are present in our world today these forces these riders ride today in our world

I don't know if you noticed but everything is not well in this world ever wonder why things are not well as they could be could it be that the Lord is trying to tell us something how are we to view earth's calamities are these simply random events untethered from the divine wheel no way God is in fact in control and he uses these things as sign to remind us that this world is on a God ordered course that will eventually lead to the cleansing of earth in preparation of the dwelling of God with man and so John borrows language and concepts used elsewhere to help his audience see that the world is on a collision course toward judgment judgment in fact that had already begun but in spite of those things in that first century world with Roman rule and the spreading of Roman peace and all of those things

God remained in control when destructive forces in this world prevail we must remember that the Lord is ultimately in control when all is not well in this world and during this particular age he dispatches forces of discipline that should be reminders that ours is a world in rebellion the depth of man's rebellion is seen in passages like Revelation chapter 9 verses 20 and 21 turn there with me Revelation chapter 9 on page 1033 the depth of man's rebellion is seen notice what it says and this is as you get deeper into this time of judgment the rest of mankind who were not killed by these plagues notice did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood which cannot see or hear or walk nor did they repent of the murders or their sorceries or their sexual morality or their thefts in spite of the unleashing of

[25 : 05] God's judgment in the world there's still those who refuse to repent the signs of this age but listen if we listen to this chapter you can hear the sighs and the prayers of the saints also here look at verses 9 through 11 there's a shift in verse 9 from earth to heaven John gets a glimpse of the souls of believers under the altar in heaven who had been persecuted some even slaughtered for their Christian witness because of their faithfulness to Christ they had been picked out to be picked on because their faith in Christ they had become targets as it were and some of them had paid the ultimate price notice their posture they are under the altar their lives had been a sacrificial offering so

Romans 12 I beseech you that you present your bodies a living sacrifice and this was literal for them notice their petition was to the sovereign Lord and notice their question how long before you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth how long oh it's reminiscent of some of the prayers of the psalmist and their lament before God of their particular situation on earth in Psalm 74 and 10 you hear one of those how long oh God is the foe to scoff is the enemy to revile your name forever notice similar as to what we see in revelation these are for the glory and for the honor of God's name that these were crying and sighing out to

God for his glory you ever have to sigh and cry and pray and talk to God when life comes crushing in from crushing down and note psalm 94 and 3 how long oh Lord shall the wicked how long shall the wicked exult they are in this posture of triumph huh it was March the 25th 1965 when the freedom marchers had marched from Selma to Montgomery and they found themselves in the audience of Dr.

Martin Luther King Jr. here and in his speech our God is marching on you hear some of the echoes of people who had been oppressed!

Subjected to some of the ugly of the earth! And King comments as he stood before there and said but today I stand before you and think over that great march!

[28 : 43] He said I can say as Sister Pollard said a 70 year old woman who lived in this community during the bus boycott and one day she was asked while walking if she didn't want to ride and when she answered no the person said well aren't you tired and in her ungrammatical profundity she said my feet is tired but my soul is rested and in the same sense King says this afternoon we can say that our feet are tired but our souls are rested tired bodies tired wheels but rested souls but King went on to say in this speech he said I know you're asking how long will it take how long will justice blind the prejudice blind the visions of men darken their understanding and drive bright bright eyed wisdom from her sacred throne somebody is asking when will wounded justice lying prostrate on the streets of Selma and Birmingham and communities all over the south be lifted from the dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men somebody is asking where will the radiant star of hope be plunged against the nocturnal bosom of this lonely night plucked from weary souls with chains of fear and manacles of death how long will justice be crucified so I come to say to you this afternoon however difficult the moment however frustrating the hour it will not be long because truth crushed to earth will rise again and he went on as only

Dr. King could do how long not long because no lie can live forever how long not long because you shall reap what you sow how long not long true forever on the scaffold wrong forever on the throne yet the scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown standeth God within the shadow keeping watch above his own how long not long because the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice how long not long and that in essence is what this what the Lord said not long just a little longer in your rest and even the weariness of the saints above and seeing the condition on earth beneath sort of mimics your condition and mine doesn't it and we wonder often how long before things would possibly even change in my situation how long must I feel crushed under the weight of this life huh their posture there under the altar their petition sovereign

Lord how long their apparel though condemned by the world they wore the white garment of justification and friends today we want to live so that our witness would be like these saints felt on earth and our prayers heard in heaven huh prayers not answered in the affirmative!

now are not to be acquainted with prayers not heard huh we often feel but prayers not answered in the firmity are not to be acquainted with God not hearing our prayers God's not long may be longer than we want but it is an answer that God is looking God is booking and God sees to it huh we want to be effective for the Lord's cause even at the cost to ourselves and ours must as these saints were must be a legacy of faithfulness regardless we must remember that the Lord is in control and because he is I can stand fast in the midst of this world even in the cross fires of whatever is happening in this world in the midst of the reality of divine judgment and divine delay there's a third thing that you and I need to be in touch with and the reality of divine wrath because we see in verses 6 12 through 17 we see the signs of the end of the age there's certain things that accompany and go throughout the age but then there are certain things in particular that are signs that we are in or we're moving toward the actual day of the

Lord we see that in verses 12 through 17 this particular concept of the day of the Lord when God was going to rise and put to rest charges against him Psalm chapter 2 speaks about that and other scriptures speak about what's pictured here is known as the day of the Lord it's the promise of God's vengeance on a God rejecting Christ rejecting world turn with me to Joel chapter 2 verses 30 and 31 page 762 and this is just one of scores of scriptures that speak about this day in the future where God is going to deal out you might say supreme and ultimate justice against his enemies notice what he says and

[34 : 45] I will show wonders! in the heavens and on the earth blood and fire and columns of smoke the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes Peter spoke about that in his sermon on the day of Pentecost but the added dimension!

to these Old Testament pictures of judgment is the lamb As the executor of God's redemption plan both for man and for the earth again you don't see him he's concealed but again when you shift these Old Testament pictures of God's wrath to come in particular toward the day of the Lord the added dimension is the person of Christ the lamb of God and his role in it the lamb who saves is also the lamb who judges and so we see this portrait of the lamb who is the lion of the tribe of is rounded out this lamb slain from the foundation of the world now he appears to judge those who will as the judge who will reclaim the world he is the lamb who will execute wrath we see that in verse 17 for the great day of their wrath the wrath of

God and of the lamb what's it say has come and who shall be able to stand what we see here is consistent with our Lord's words and what's known as the Olivet discourse Matthew chapter 24 Mark chapter 13 Luke 21 and Luke's version he speaks of these signs of the ages the signs of the age but then he zeros in on signs that parallel exactly what we see here and excuse me but we need to get turn there to page 881 Luke chapter 21 and verse 25 and following because we hear echoes of Jesus teaching in what we see here in Revelation chapter 6 look at verse 25 and there will be signs in sun and moon and stars this cosmic chaos chaos of sorts and on the earth distress of nations and perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world for the powers of heaven will be shaken and then they will see the son of man coming in a cloud and with power and great glory now when these things begin to take place straighten up and raise also speaks of the cosmic chaos of the end of the age you need to turn to it but chapter 2 verses 10 through 13 but the day of the

Lord will come like a thief chapter 3 10 through 13 like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a roar and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved and the earth and the works that are done in people are you to be in lives of holiness and godliness waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn but according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness and wherein will dwell the dwelling of God and the Lamb will be on this sanctified earth oh signs in this age but signs in the day of the

Lord to come what does this mean for you and me there's going to be judgment without discrimination we see that the high the low the rich and the poor there's going to be extreme fear in running on that day this particular passage friends can help us and strengthen us give us a clearer perspective on God's purposes and what they mean for us now as well as in the future this passage can should give you and me a greater resolve for faithfulness even as we hear the size of the saints through this passage who have gone on before us and for their testimony for God even to the point of their death when people look at us do they see a certain sense of respect and anticipation are we people simply a business as usual greater resolve for faithfulness and then we through passages like this can grow in our state of readiness how is it that the dwelling of God in heaven will shift to the dwelling of God because

[40 : 14] God now and in the future is about the business of judgment our prayer is that we as faithful ones would be faithful that we would most of all mimic our Lord and his faithful who is faithful unto death even death on a cross who the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame sat down at the right hand of the throne of God and then there have been saints who have gone in his train and it is the call for you and me to follow them today may we be found faithful is my prayer let us pray father we worship you this day and we give you praise this day oh lamb of god as the song says we come and we come now we come humbly we come bowing we come before you in submission in our prayer that we would walk in this world world in a way lord that reflects our faithfulness to you in spite of the chaos that's in this world in spite of the forces that have been sent out in this world that are agents of lord of divine discipline may we not ignore them as we see them but may lord our consciousness increase and our faithfulness deepen for the glory and honor of god lord we bless you today amen