



FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVELATION 6:9-17 Martyrs and Darkness

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026

DEAR FAMILY OF FAITH,

As we continue in chapter 6, we see the opening of the fifth and sixth seals. In Revelation 5:8 we saw that God keeps the prayers of the saints always before Him as incense in golden bowls meaning our prayers are precious to Him. In Revelation 6:9 we see that God allows those who have been martyred, because of their testimony and their love for the Word of God, to have a special place underneath the altar in Heaven. They are dressed in white and comforted by the fact that God's judgment and vengeance is scheduled, but others would have to be martyred as well. This brings me great comfort—that God is in control and working all things according to His timetable and His justice. Revelation 6:16-17 remind us that when God's wrath does come, men will not be able to stand before Him.

Bro Stan

REVELATION 6 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

The Fifth Seal—Martyrs

9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; 10 and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren

who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

The Sixth Seal—Terror

12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 6:9-17

The First Six Seals [part 2]

A. The first four seals of the scroll bring four horsemen.

B. The fifth and sixth seals of the scroll are opened.

1. (9-11) The fifth seal brings forth the cry of the martyrs.

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 testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed*.

a. **I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God:** That these souls were **under the altar** emphasizes that their life blood was poured out as an offering to God. The idea is drawn from [Leviticus 4:7](#): *And he shall pour the remaining blood at the base of the altar of the burnt offering.*

b. **Who had been slain for the word of God:** It is probably best to see this as the cry of *all* martyrs for God’s truth, not merely believers persecuted by the coming world leader, the first horseman of [Revelation 6:1-2](#).

c. **And they cried with a loud voice:** These souls in heaven cried out for vengeance (**until You judge and avenge our blood**). We usually don’t think of God’s people crying out for vengeance, but here they made their cry to God, and leave the matter with Him.

i. When God’s people are persecuted, He will set it right. It isn’t wrong for God’s people to ask Him to do what He promised to do. In this way the blood of Abel cried out from the ground for vengeance ([Genesis 4:10](#)), as did the blood of unavenged murders in the land of Israel ([Numbers 35:33](#)).

d. **It was said to them that they should rest a little while longer:** These saints were instructed to *wait*. How long must they wait? **Until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.** This may mean that they should wait until *all* God’s appointed martyrs are killed.

i. Or, because the words **the number of** are supplied by the translators, not the text, it may mean that they wait until the *character* of the remaining martyrs on earth is perfected and complete. It is character – the way that one *lives* – that makes a martyr, not the way that one *dies*.

2. (12-17) The opening of the sixth seal brings cosmic disruption.

I looked when He 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. 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. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was

moved out of its place. And 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, 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! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

a. **A great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth:** In the Bible, celestial disturbances are often connected with the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Zephaniah and Jesus Himself all described such things.

i. A passage from Zephaniah is an example: *The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.* ([Zephaniah 1:14-16](#))

ii. Or, as in [Joel 2:10-11](#): *The sun and moon grow dark, and stars diminish their brightness... for the day of the LORD is great and terrible; who can endure it?*

iii. Those who regard these events as *history* have to greatly spiritualize them. One example is Adam Clarke, who said this **great earthquake** was “A most stupendous change in the civil and religious constitution of the world. If it refer to Constantine

the Great, the change that was made by his conversion to Christianity might be very properly represented under the emblem of an *earthquake*.”

b. **The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth:** It is best to regard these pictures as *real*, but *poetic*. John did not use technically precise scientific language, but he simply described what he saw.

c. **And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves:** All people are equally brought low by God’s wrath. The judgment is all the more profound because it is the **wrath of the Lamb**.

i. “It is the wrath of love, the wrath of sacrificial love which, having done the absolute utmost for us and our salvation, tells us as nothing else could the certainty with which evil awaits its doom at the hand of God.” (Torrance)

d. **Hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne:** They hid not only from the terror of the judgments, but **from the face of Him who sits on the throne**. “What sinners dread most is not death, but the revealed presence of God.” (Swete)

C. Observations: How do the seals fit in God’s prophetic plan?

1. There are many different opinions, but it seems best to say that the seals, trumpets, and bowls that will be described later are not strictly sequential events. It could be said that chronologically, the trumpets do not follow the seals and the bowls do not follow the trumpets in a strict order.

a. The first six seals are a “Summary of the judgments distributed over the whole book; a brief

summary of what will occur in ‘the day of the Lord,’ up to the time of His actual Apocalypse or Unveiling in [Revelation 19](#).” (Bullinger)

b. That span begins with the revelation of the Antichrist (the first seal) and it concludes with the revealing of the *face of Him who sits on the throne* (the seventh seal).

2. Do the seals represent conditions *immediately before the end*, or more *general conditions prevailing over a more extended period, up until the return of Jesus?*

a. There is a sense in which we can say that they represent *both* – dictators, war, famine, death and persecution have been familiar throughout all history, but not to the *magnitude* and the *severity* with which they will be present in the Great Tribulation.

b. “The wars and famines predicted in the second and third seals are not unfamiliar events in the history of the world, but never before since the time of Noah has a judgment so devastating been consummated as to destroy one-fourth of the earth’s population at one stroke.” (Walvoord)

c. As far as the seals are concerned, they will be an *intense amplification* of bad conditions often experienced through history. God will give mankind over to his fallen nature – *and more!*

i. This is not the case with some of the trumpet and bowl judgments of later chapters. They are completely unique manifestations of God’s judgment.

3. The sixth seal concludes with a valid question: *Who is able to stand? Only the believer can stand before this great judgment, the one who is justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.*

a. *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand.* ([Romans 5:1-2](#))

b. *I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received and in which you stand.* ([1 Corinthians 15:1](#))

c. *Testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.* ([1 Peter 5:12](#))

d. The believer can stand in the face of this great wrath of God because Jesus already bore the wrath the believer deserved.

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