

Rev 26-01-11b

We pick up our study here and in verse 12 of chapter six, John says, I looked when he opened the sixth seal and behold, there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth of hair and the moon became like blood. These are not revelations.

They are reiterations of things that have been shared in scripture in the past as harbingers portents and characteristics of the great day of the Lord. So again, as I said in the first session, these first five seals were judgments that originate with human efforts to do without God, to do for themselves. But with the sixth seal, God is now intervening and is actively perpetrating consequence and judgment on the earth.

And these are now signs that are at the end of the tribulation period. You remember that formally speaking, the seven year period, the first three and a half years is God gives hands off to the ruler who will come to show what he can do. He fails, everything comes apart and consequences unfold in the last three and a half years.

This now, the things that happened with the opening of the sixth seal are said elsewhere in scripture to happen at the end of that time. So they've been mentioned before, the earthquakes, Matthew 24, verse seven, the Lord Jesus speaks of this. The sun turning dark is in Joel chapter two, verses one and two, and also Joel 2, 30 and 31.

Both places in Joel chapter two, it talks about the sun turning black. Now the moon becoming like blood is also in Joel 2, 31. The stars falling from heaven, the Lord Jesus talks about this in Matthew 24, 29.

And the sky receding like a scroll, this is Isaiah chapter 34, verse four. All of those previous prophetic descriptions are given in the age of Israel. And this is the last seven years of that age.

And the Lord Jesus is teaching. In Matthew 24, the church age has not yet begun. He is in the closing weeks of the age of Israel when he speaks these words.

The earthquake, the mountains being displaced, the islands moving, this isn't given in terms of a simile in the way that the sun and the moon are described. You know, it becomes like this or like that. This is literal disruption of the earth's crust apparently.

At a higher level, why would this be part of the judgment and why would it be described in this way? On the land, people think, well, I've built my house on the rock, so to speak. I'm on the land here and it is fixed in place. And immovable, but it isn't.

And you see the devastation that happens with earthquakes. But why does it mention the islands? It says, the sky recedes every mountain and island in verse 14, are moved out of their place. You know what happens when there are earthquakes at sea? Tsunami.

This is tsunami effects. And depending on how much of the water in the sea is left, we know

from upcoming events that there are going to be heat events and water is going to be drying up. And so there's a scarcity of water.

And then because there are still islands, they are still in the sea. And whatever serves as the new shoreline is now going to be tsunami. We know this from experience.

And so you go from not having enough water to having too much. Everything is out of balance. But what man looks to and assumes to be stable isn't.

And an island is in the midst of the sea. And you think I have risen above the chaos. I have found a way.

And you could imagine that in these times described by the first four seals, there are those who have found a way to isolate themselves. The rich have a palatial property and mansion and have supplies in the basement. They've insulated themselves.

They've isolated themselves. And they are islands amidst the chaos that is caused by the breakdown of human effort and human government and human economy and human interactions. And well, I am safe and secure in my compound.

I've got security. I've got provision. I am untouched.

But when God acts, even those that have been able to insulate themselves from human effort and human failure, when the judgment of God comes at the opening of the sixth seal, they are no longer impervious. Those islands will be shaken and moved. And so there's a symbolic element here as well as the literal.

And verse 15, keep a count on your fingers as I read the different categories of people. You ready? The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave, and every free. I'm not counting like they do in ASL.

Elizabeth could do it with her. Yeah, this is six and this is seven in ASL. But notice, as with so many other things in the revelation, this is a sevenfold description.

Every shape, size, and category are represented here. It doesn't matter who you are, from the slave to the king, everything in between, no one is unaffected by this. Their human efforts at insulation and compartmentalization and protection and self-defense have all failed.

So what do they do? The kings, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, the slaves, and the free hide themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. Do you recall a time when kings hid in caves? I'll leave you to search that out in the book of Yeshua, the book of Joshua, and the conquest of the land. And there is more than one connection to Joshua in the book of Revelation.

But again, it's an Old Testament connection, an Old Testament allusion. And you see all kinds of people, but they have the same reaction. And this reaction, when the judgment of God appears,

they hide.

What happened in the garden when Adam and Eve disobeyed and the presence of God was manifest and they knew it was God, they heard the sound, they heard the voice of God in the garden. They knew they were naked. They knew why they were naked, because of disobedience.

And what was their reaction? They hid themselves. They did not rush forward and throw themselves on the mercy of God. Oh Lord, we messed up.

They hid. This is not the response of believers who have grown in grace and knowledge. You cannot run and you cannot hide.

There is no place you can go. The psalmist talks about, where can I go that you can't find me? There is no place. God is our heavenly father.

And we appeal to his grace and his mercy on the basis of the completed work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who shed his blood and bore our judgment so that we do not bear judgment. He took it in our place and we avail ourselves of it. We don't earn it.

We don't deserve it. We're not worthy of it. Nevertheless, in humility and in recognition that grace is available for such a worm as I, as the hymn says, these individuals are unrepentant.

They would rather die than convert. There are those who do convert. And in some cases they pay for their lives with their lives.

Here, fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the lamb. Notice all seven categories of people described in the preceding verse, know the source of these judgmental occurrences. They know that God is on his throne and they know that this is the lamb and his wrath.

Why is the lamb angry? Why are the souls under the altar unhappy and making appeal to God? An undeserved death at the hands of those who should be judged and that blood should be avenged. The Lord Jesus voluntarily offered his life and shed his blood as the Passover lamb to redeem us. And when we accept it, his love and his effort on our behalf is vindicated.

Its purpose is fulfilled. Those who reject that, who spit on that gift, who decide that they are sufficient in and of themselves, are rightly viewed with anger and are rightly judged. Think about those up in verse 10.

Those souls under the altar cry with a loud voice, saying, how long, oh despot. But what kind of despot? This is not the Roman Caesar. This is not the dictatorial exemplars that we have in the past.

This is an all-powerful ruler who is righteous and true. And notice, vengeance and judgment on those who have wrongly taken life out of self-centeredness and selfish interest, promoting their

own agenda and their own efforts to be right in their own eyes. The despotes, the judge of all the earth is holy and true to take vengeance and to render judgment on them.

This is just. It is a reflection of truth. It is both necessary and righteous.

That's why they acknowledge that God is holy and true to do so, as is the lamb. And this is the lamb as it had been slain. This isn't just a resurrected spotless lamb.

He bears the marks of his death at the hands of men. And his wrath at rejection. Many of us can think about times where we have sacrificially gone an extra mile or two miles or have worked extremely hard in the interest of others.

And it's one thing that others maybe don't notice or don't say thank you, or are sort of oblivious to how much work that was done. But if they are well aware and they act as though that was unnecessary and pointless and go away. Reminds me of Foghorn Leghorn when that little chicken is following him around.

And he says, go away, boy, you bother me. To disregard and treat as of no importance and of no value that sacrificial work, there is a righteous indignation. And this is the wrath of the lamb.

Remember, Jesus said that you either fall on the rock and are broken in contrition and in humility and in recognition of God's grace and the acceptance of it, or the rock falls on you and you're crushed. It isn't a side issue. It isn't something that can be avoided.

We either fall on the rock in humility and have our human arrogance broken on that rock, or that rock is going to be cast upon us and we will be crushed underneath it. So that's what's happening here. And people try to explain away the wrath of the lamb and, oh, the gentle Jesus would never be angry.

The gentle Jesus would never perpetrate judgment. These people are just sort of in self-induced misery. The plain sense of these passages is inescapable.

Even the kings of the earth, the slaves of the earth, and everybody in between recognize that when the sun is darkened and the moon turns to blood, the great earthquake takes place, everything on the earth is shaken. This is the wrath of the lamb and of him who sits on the throne. They know the source, but they do not appeal.

Even Saul, King Saul, when he recognized that he was under judgment for disobedience, talking to Samuel, said, let me try to repent. Let me try to approach God. These people don't even do that.

They just say, kill me, kill me now. Rocks, fall on me. I just, I don't want to be anywhere near this God.

I don't want to accept his mercy. I don't want to come to him on his terms. If he doesn't meet me on my terms, I don't want him.

The great day of his wrath has come and who is able to stand? There are those who are able to stand, aren't there? And we're going to see them upcoming in this next chapter. It is possible to stand by God's grace, in God's strength, through God's power. It is possible to stand.

Who is able to stand? There's an answer to that question. They don't like the answer and they reject the answer. And they would rather be slain.

They would rather be crushed by the rocks. And they call on the rocks to fall on them. And God's going to grant their wish in the same way that in the eternal future, those who end up in the lake of fire and are destroyed from the presence of God.

That's what scripture literally says, translate it from the Greek. They are destroyed from his presence. Our God is a consuming fire.

He's not a torturing fire. Our God is a consuming fire. That which is thrown into the fire of judgment is no more.

I do not believe in unending eternal conscious torment. Scripture does not teach it. And by the time we finish revelation, we will have covered that passage.

Being cast into the lake of fire, this is the second death. It's like the first death. Where is someone who has died? They are nowhere.

What's wrong, Bearded? It's so scary. Let me fix that. Who is able to stand? We are able to stand.

We are able to stand in God's grace and by God's power. So after these things, now we're in chapter seven. After these things, I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.

Round earth, corners. I've seen people... You know how there are these apocryphal explanations that, oh, the Bible is actually correct. And in some cases, I think it's valid when it says God stretches out the heavens and we find out that we have an expanding universe.

But they've decided that there are four elevated plateaus and that they are actually the corners of the earth. Okay, if you wanna see it that way. This is a figure of speech.

The four corners of the globe, we say in the modern age, we know that globes don't have corners. It just means go as far as you can in any direction. These are the cardinal directions, Northeast, South and West.

There was a belief in the ancient world that when the wind blew from a true direction, straight from the West or the East or the North or the South, it was better than if it came from a diagonal. And so the corners were the ill winds. And the cardinal directions were the good things.

You get the sun in the East and in the West. And you have the North star and you have the

constellations around the perimeter of the heavens. And you have Northeast, South and West.

And these are reassuring and they represent structure and predictability. But the things that the diagonals, and you can chase this down if you look at the constellations and the associated tribes of Israel, and where is Judah and so on. But four corners of the earth and they're holding the four winds of the earth.

Now, after these things is not chronological. Chapter seven, verse one. And we have to understand this is both Semitic.

It is Jewish in the way storytelling is done. This is the age of Israel. And this doesn't mean after six seals cracked.

After John has seen this vision of the lamb opening the seals and the concomitant consequences. After these things, that vision is complete. I'm no longer looking at the lamb.

I'm not looking at the scrolls. I'm not looking at the seals. Scroll, singular, not looking at the seals.

After these things were presented to my view, you could put in parentheses. Now I see a different vision. I see four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.

John is still in a heavenly perspective. John knows at this point the earth is round because he can see it. But there are angels at the four cardinal directions from his perspective, rotated 45 degrees.

They're at the corners, not at the poles and the equator. And they are holding the four winds of the earth that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea or on any tree. Notice there are trees.

There is earth. There is a sea. And we have now rewound.

We have gone back. We don't talk much about rewind anymore because that is the days of tapes and everything's digital. But rewind meant go back to the beginning.

The old VHS tapes, those of you that are old enough, if you rented them at Blockbuster, they had a little label that said, be kind, rewind. It had a picture of a bee on it so that the next guy didn't have to wait for five minutes while the tape got back to the beginning. This is a rewind.

These angels are holding the four winds of the earth that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea or on any tree. Notice now, again, first five seals, things are happening on the earth and there is human agency, both human commission and human omission. There is human dereliction.

There is human failure. There is human seeking to gratify and get for oneself what one wants. There is warfare between people.

Men are shedding men's blood and so on, starving one another, hiding from one another. But this is the winds. God controls the wind.

To this day, people can try to suck power out of the wind with the power generation, with these giant windmills and so on, but God decides when and where the wind blows. And these winds are going to do something and it is going to blow on the earth, blow on the sea and blow on the trees. Is this for good or for ill? It doesn't yet say, but the wind is going to stop.

And you get the idea that these are going to be ill winds because of what follows. I saw another angel ascending from the east. What do you know about the east? The east is the direction of the sunrise.

This is the direction that the glory of God is going to return from to reoccupy the temple in Jerusalem. The glory departed heading east and it is going to return from the east and come through the gate. The doorway of the tabernacle and the temple faced east.

It is the direction of hope, of salvation, of light after darkness. And this angel arises from the east and you get the idea this is going to be something good that will happen from this angel. He arises from the east and he has the seal of the living God, the seal of the living God.

What do you know about this seal? The seal of the God of life, the living God. Have we seen anything related to this seal so far in Revelation? We have just observed with John a seven-sealed scroll and these seals being opened or broken one by one. What sealed those seals? That's God's scroll.

It came from his hand and it is sealed with his seal. This is the same seal, the same seal. You can put the references there.

He has the seal of the living God. He cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea. So now we know that these are ill winds that have been put in abeyance for the moment and they are not gonna blow for harm.

Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees with the wind. We're in tornado alley here. We know what the wind can do.

We know what the wind can do to the sea. It can mount up giant tidal waves. We call them tidal, tides are done by the moon, but the wind can whip the sea into a frenzy and create devastation.

And the wind can blow on the earth and a hot dry wind can cook the crops where they stand and render them useless and inedible. Do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees. The earth, the sea and the trees.

What do these three things have in common? Other than partaking of existence on planet earth. The earth, the sea and the trees. These are the earliest parts of creation.

Remember when God spoke and the sea was gathered and the dry land appeared and the first

form of life, let the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed and trees that produce fruit after their kind. They're all three sources of food. You either get food from the sea, from the land or from trees.

Trees were thought of differently than grain crops and so on because that fruit is up in the air. But do not harm the earth, the sea or the trees. Why would you care about harm to the trees? Look at the hand wringing over the destruction of the Amazon rainforest, the excess carbon dioxide that is building up in the atmosphere, which is where the wind blows.

And so these are threats to human existence and human sustenance, human wellbeing. If the sea is harmed, you can't eat food that comes from it. If the land is harmed and you can't grow food or sustain herd animals because they've got nothing to eat.

And so you turn to the trees and the trees are shriveled and not producing fruit, what's left to eat? You're pretty well done. But do not harm them until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads. So a quiz question, how many times can you confidently claim that the seal of the living God has been used? It's 144,007 times because it seals the scroll with seven seals and it seals 144,000 individuals from the nation of Israel, from the tribes descended from Jacob.

Same seal, there's only one spoken of in scripture. Isn't it interesting that that seal is used for the seven fold judgments that are contained in the scroll? It is also a seal of preservation. The same God is just as certain to save and to preserve and to lift up, to embrace and to cover with love and grace via his sovereign power, his ruling despot power, that same power will judge and will seal the fate of those who refuse to accept his offer of love and grace.

Same seal. I heard the number of those who were sealed, 144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed. There are those who say that these are Jews if you will, who are sealed so that they are not slain and do not become martyrs.

And so the blood under the altar that we saw previously were Gentile martyrs. And so God lets the Gentile believers be slain but he preserves the Jewish. It's a strange view to me.

And it helps to understand that when John is now viewing this, this is rewind. We are back to the beginning. And these individuals are not sealed from the effects of what takes place on earth.

What is it they are sealed from? What will they not die from? Don't let the wind harm the sea, the earth or the trees until we have sealed these individuals. God's action is not going to harm them. God is going to preserve them.

But it doesn't say, don't let the horsemen ride forth. Don't let the famine take place. Don't let warfare and bloodshed take place until we have sealed them.

Don't let the wind blow that harms the earth, the sea and the trees. This is natural disaster,

natural occurrences that are going to be described hereafter. So, and then we have a great deal of space taken up detailing, it could have just said from the 12 tribes and not list them, but it does list them.

And we'll see why, but not this morning. So from the tribes, and if you look closely, Ephraim is not specifically mentioned and Dan is not specifically mentioned. Instead, you have Joseph and Manasseh.

Manasseh is a double tribe from Joseph, but that lets them leave Dan out and Ephraim is not mentioned. And these in the Old Testament are the two most evil tribes. Dan sets up golden calf worship in the later days.

Ephraim is the description for the entire Northern Kingdom. And so again, symbolically speaking, they are not sealed because they are emblematic of rebellious disobedience. Then in verse nine, after these things, I looked and behold a great multitude, which no one could number all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands.

Again, on earth, Israelites are being sealed. In heaven, everyone irrespective of tribe, race, tongue is standing before the throne, clear before the trumpets, before the bulls, before the thunders, before the seventh seal, you have the white robed multitude in heaven. And again, this is strong suggestion that the rapture has taken place and that's us.

And there is this sevenfold doxology. As the angels stand around the throne, the elders, the four living creatures fall on their faces before the thrones, worship God, blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, and power, and might. The sevenfold doxology belong to God.

And he is righteous in judgment. He is also righteous in preservation. And as we close for this morning, this is what we should remember about our God.

There are things that seem unfair. There are things that seem to not make sense from a human point of view. Look around at the world today.

There are people who believe they know what righteousness is. And when they think it isn't being accomplished according to their standard of what is right or what is wrong, they go violent. They will become agents of the very kind of evil they claim to be opposing.

And the hypocrisy and the blindness is scary. It is only the grace of God that gives us clarity to see in ourselves from an objective point of view, from God's righteous standards, what is true and what is right, what is holy. Verse 10 of chapter six.

God is all powerful and he is powerful to save and he is powerful to judge. It is his holy standard. It is his righteous judgment that is in view.

Anytime we try to take that prerogative to ourselves, I will decide what is right. You can see the

result. Look at the news.

There are thousands of people who are doing what is right in their own eyes. As it says at the end of the, is it Judges or Joshua, where it said everyone did what was right in his own eyes. And that's what's happening today.

We can't trust our own eyes. We can't trust. We've seen this in our preceding studies, that little thing inside that says, I'm right.

And I don't understand why you don't think like I do because it can't be wrong if it feels so right. I am convicted of how right this is and how right my view is. And if you notice people on two opposite and irreconcilable sides of an issue feel equally right and are convinced that they're right and the other guy is completely wrong.

We have to purge that out of ourselves. God is right. God is holy and true.

God will seal some for judgment and he will seal others for salvation. And it is up to us under which seal we fall. And this is why it is so imperative that we take these future scenes to heart.

Not so much worried about, it won't be fun to stand in the white robe throng with a palm branch, as what am I doing with my time and opportunity today and tomorrow and the next day to submit myself under the mighty hand of God so that he can exalt us in due time and not judge us in due time. As it were, I want to be someone who is sealed for grace and sealed for mercy and sealed from divine intervention, angels with wind, angels with the power of destruction. God says, not these, these belong to me.

I am putting my stamp of ownership on them. Some of you remember our study of the ink horn angels work in the Old Testament. And we'll review that quickly next time.

But if we don't remember anything else from looking at this section, God is righteous. He is holy and true. The lamb as it had been slain, that death and resurrection can either read down to our benefit and enable us to stand in God's presence with a white robe and with the words to an eternal song of praise, or it can put us in a category where it is the wrath of the lamb and it is the wrath of him who sits on the throne.

And rightly so, righteously so, is aimed at us. You cannot stand in front of another human being and defend them from the judgment of God. We have our hands full, ensuring that we are not qualifying ourselves for that judgment.

By patient continuance in well-doing, Romans 2, we should be seeking for glory and honor and immortality to be on the positive side, the heavenly side of these scenes, not the earthly judgmental side. And if these pictures do nothing else, even if we can't know exactly when it will take place or how it will take place, we can know one thing. We want to be on the right side of God's attention.

I want to be sealed for preservation, not sealed to judgment. And that's within our power. God has given us that ability to have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the guidance and instruction from his word, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and be ready to serve and to function on the positive side, on the salvation side and the blessing side, the reward and opportunity side of all of these things that are to come.

We have nothing to fear from the dark side. From the judgment side, when we choose correctly, when we're good stewards of our time and opportunity, this life is so short and eternity is so long. We're determining where we will stand hour by hour, day by day, right now.

So it's an encouragement and it's also a sobering, fearful expectation of judgment on those who trample underfoot the son of God, Hebrews. You remember that? Hebrews chapter six, Hebrews chapter 10. If we disregard, there is no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment.

You see that unfolding here. Well, let's close in a word of prayer. We'll pick up our study Wednesday night.

Father, thank you for this wonderful revelation. Thank you for the opportunity it gives us to heed the example, just as we look at the historical examples, we can look at these future examples and be motivated to avail ourselves of the grace, the provision, the opportunities that are ours in Christ. We pray that in all things, he will be glorified and we can live a life that pleases you and is a part of the accomplishment of your purposes now and in the ages to come.

We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.