

The Seven Seals of Revelation



1. ... the Lamb opened one of the seals ... 2. and behold a white horse ... 3. the second seal ... 4. another horse *that was* red ... 5. the third seal ... and lo a black horse ... 7. the fourth seal ... 8. and behold a pale horse ... (Revelation 6)

As we studied the Antichrist, we dealt with the first four seals that the Lord Jesus opened and, therefore, we will not look at them in detail at this time; however, let's do a quick review in order to refresh our memories.

1 When the first seal is opened, John sees a white horse with its rider; you'll recall that this is the Antichrist launched into the world. He comes on a white horse in order to appear to be the Messiah of the Jews and the highly anticipated Mahdi of the Muslims. He will come as the savior of the world – the one who will provide stability in the midst of chaos and answers to the burning questions of the day. He is given his authority and goes forth to conquer the world: “the dragon gave him his [the dragon's] power [*dunamis* – strength, ability], and his [the dragon's] seat, and great authority,” and “power [*exousia* – authority] was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (Revelation 13:2, 7; cp. Luke 4:5-6 where Satan offers this same *authority* to Jesus).¹ As the leader of the kingdom of clay and iron (Daniel 2), the Antichrist will receive his abilities from Satan.



2 The second seal reveals a red horse whose rider will take peace from the earth; paranoia and distrust will fill the hearts of most, which will lead to killings – and I believe that those who are truly the Lord's will be particularly targeted. This horseman, and the following two, are there to do the unspoken will of the Antichrist; he will appear to be the savior of the world but, at the same time, will set out to remove everyone from the earth who is unwanted: the children of God, the weak, the poor, and those who do not fully support him. He will never be fully successful in his mission, but the population of the world will be dramatically reduced through the work of the Antichrist's three horsemen.



3 The third seal brings a black horse and world-wide famine (at least for those of little means). This will provide a logical reason for the False Prophet to

¹ Strong's Online.

implement the mark as a means of controlling the flow of the very limited food resources. The dramatic reduction in what is needed to sustain life will serve to escalate the paranoia and distrust (the work of the rider of the red horse).



4 The opening of the fourth seal shows a pale-green horse that is ridden by Death, and Hades (*hell*) follows. With this horseman comes the death of one-quarter of the world's population; to the murderous paranoia brought by the rider of the red horse and the famine by the rider of the black horse, will be added numerous other means of unnatural death (disasters of all sorts, both natural and man-made), and the animals throughout the world will become violent against men.



As the world reels under the devastation caused by the three horsemen, the Antichrist will very calmly and deliberately provide the world with satisfying explanations as they hang onto his every word. The world “worshipped the dragon [Satan] which gave power unto the beast [the Antichrist]: and they worshipped the beast” (Revelation 13:4); most of the people of the world will acclaim the Antichrist – he will be as a god to them; they will recognize that his great influence comes from the devil and, rather than being deterred, they will worship the devil as well. “And it was given unto him [the Antichrist] to make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7); if history is any indication, then he will place the blame for all of the world's catastrophes upon the children of God, and they will become the target of great violence.



9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: **10.** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? **11.** And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Revelation 6)

5 The opening of the fifth seal reveals the children of God who have been killed by the Antichrist and his horsemen. Undoubtedly, there will be those who will not pander after the Antichrist, for whatever reasons, who are not *in Christ*; this is not speaking of these, for they, like all of the unrighteous dead, will be kept in Hades until the time when they will stand before God. It is specifically stated that these *souls* were killed for the Word of God and for the witness that they kept; they remained faithful to the Lord and it cost them their lives.

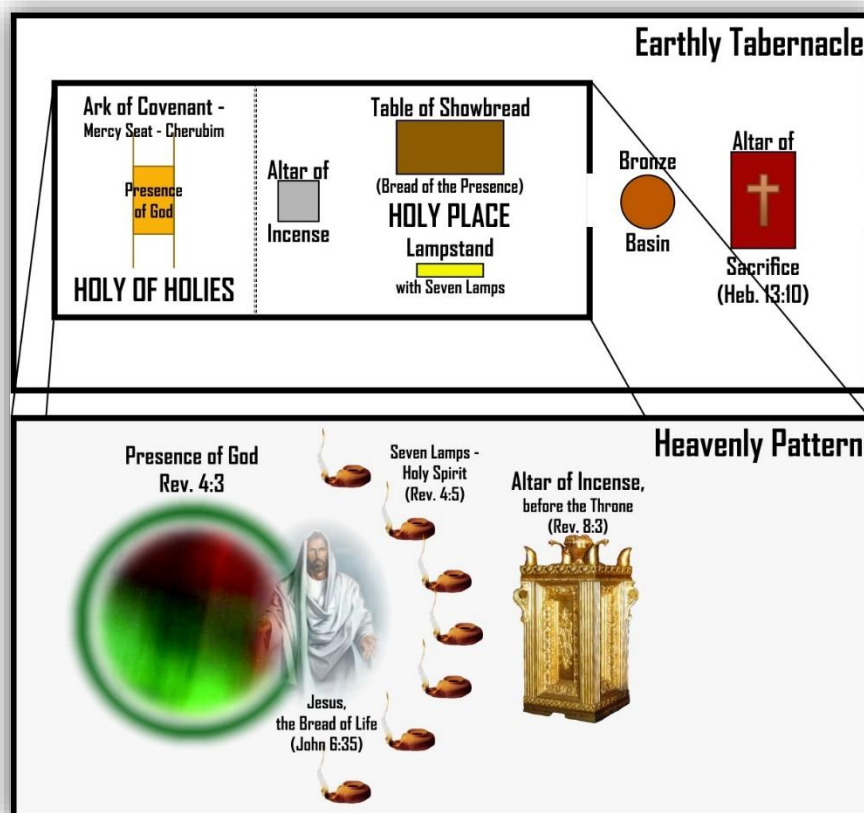
We have here the phrase *under the altar*, which seems to be an odd place for these souls; however, *under* could be better translated as before, or at the foot of.² What altar is this? You'll recall that when Moses was given the plans for the construction of the tabernacle, the Lord told him to be sure to build it according to the plans that he had been given on the mount, for it was a shadow of heavenly things (Exodus 26:30; Hebrews 8:5). In other words, the physical tabernacle that Moses was told to build was representative of heaven itself – particularly regarding the holy place and the inner most holy place.

Within the tabernacle, there were two altars: the altar of sacrifice that stood in the outer court and the altar of incense, which was in the holy place and stood before the veil that hid the most holy place (the presence of God). It was on the altar of sacrifice that the blood was shed, which, when mixed with the faith of the one making the sacrifice, would provide temporary cleansing from sin. Under the New Covenant, the altar of sacrifice became the cross upon which Jesus died, thereby ending forever the need for further sacrifices (Hebrews 13:10). No mention is made of this altar being in heaven; it's not there – it has never been there, for Jesus has always been that one Sacrifice even before the worlds were framed (Revelation 13:8). This altar of sacrifice foreshadowed the coming of Jesus, the Deliverer, Who would give His life in payment for the sins of mankind; it was upon the *altar* of the cross that Jesus died and, through His resurrection, broke the power of Satan in fulfillment of the promise that Jehovah made to Satan in the Garden of Eden (Hebrews 2:14; Genesis 3:15).

There is an altar before the throne of God in heaven, which is the heavenly altar of incense (Revelation 8:3). Within the earthly tabernacle, the priests were required to burn incense upon this altar every morning and evening (Exodus 30:7-8), and it was located in the Holy Place, right in front of the veil that hid the Holy of Holies from view. Like the heavenly pattern, this altar stood before the presence of the Lord;

² Friberg Lexicon.

Jehovah stated that He would be present between the cherubim above the mercy seat within the Holy of Holies (Exodus 25:22). When the living creatures and elders fell before the Lamb in worship, they were holding bowls filled with incense (plural) that are identified as being the *prayers of the saints* (Revelation



5:8). In the tabernacle, as the incense was burned upon the altar, it produced a sweet fragrance before the presence of the Lord and symbolized the prayers of the faithful of Israel. Even so now, as the prayers of God's people are offered unto Him, through the interceding work of Jesus and the Spirit (Romans 8:26, 34) they come before the Lord as a sweet smell. It is before (*under*) this altar in heaven that the souls of the saints who have been put to death, are gathered.

These saints have been killed for their commitment to the Word of God and for their testimony. When Satan declared war upon those who are the Lord's, we are told that he is targeting those who "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17b). These who have been killed, have died as a result of Satan's war against the children of God and their willingness to remain faithful to the Lord unto death; they have not succumbed to the death that is a result of sin entering into the world – they have died prematurely because of their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, Whose name is also the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), stated explicitly that if we love Him, then we must do what He has commanded (John 14:15). Our commitment to the Word of God is inextricably

linked to our obedience to the Lord Jesus – in truth, they are one and the same (John 14:6; 17:17).

What we must recognize and accept is that, as we walk the narrow pathway to life, we will be noticeably different from those about us – even from professing Christians. One of the keys to this is our understanding that the holy calling of God, which we have received, requires us to separate from all that He calls unclean (2 Timothy 1:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17). A majority of professing Christians today thrive on the love that is expressed within Ecumenism; yet these same people will look with disdain upon those who are walking according to the commands of Scripture. The *love* that they have found is an inclusive expression of acceptance; they embrace those of differing faiths as *brothers and sisters in the Lord* – they might well be spiritual *brothers and sisters*, but it is also evident to those who have eyes to see, that they are not *in the Lord*! Paul made it very clear to the Romans that even a teaching that might be very close to being Biblically accurate is to be rejected outright (Romans 16:17). Such a teaching is unclean before God, and we must have nothing to do with it lest we be rejected by the God of the Narrow Way (2 Corinthians 6:17).

If we are willing to accept the unmistakable teachings of Scripture, then it soon becomes apparent that we can have no spiritual fellowship with Ecumenical Evangelicals today. “This know also, that in the last days perilous [troublesome] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves [*philautos* – love of self, selfish] ... unholy ... despisers of those that are good [*aphilagathos* – not loving the good] ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God [loving pleasure rather than loving God]; having a form [an appearance] of godliness [reverence toward God], but denying [having rejected] the power thereof: **from such turn away**” (2 Timothy 3:1-5).³ These characteristics of people will herald *troublesome times* for the faithful child of God because, against this societal profile, the child of God will be easily identifiable; yet a majority of the expressions that Paul uses are also common within the “Christian” community today, and not just in the world. The reality is that if we are walking in faithfulness to the Lord (i.e., in obedience to His commands), then we will be conspicuous, not only against the world but also those who hold to a form of Christianity; however, during the rule of the Antichrist, this contrast will become even greater.

³ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

It must be our determination, through the working of the Spirit of God within us and the adequate protection of the armor of God, that we will remain faithful to the Lord. Jesus said: “But when they shall lead [should arrest] *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand [do not be anxious beforehand] what ye shall [should] speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (Mark 13:11).⁴ The armor of God provides protection from the onslaught of the devil; the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God will ensure that we have a ready word whether the time is convenient or not (2 Timothy 4:2).

We are not told why these souls are gathered around the altar of incense in heaven, but it seems to be appropriate since they have a petition that they bring before the Lord. Their question for the Lord is quite simple: when will You exact justice for our deaths from those who are living in the earth? They have been killed because of their commitment to the Lord, and so they are asking Him when He will judge the world for killing those who are His. It is apparent that these who are gathered at the altar of incense have been martyred during the rule of the Antichrist, for they call upon the Lord to avenge their deaths against those who *are dwelling* (present tense) on the earth.⁵ From the missions of the riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses, it is clear that the people of the world will be under attack; the last rider alone will have authority to kill one-quarter of the world’s population, which will be billions of people. Everyone who is committed to the Lord and His Word will be a hindrance to the agenda of the Antichrist, and will be at the top of his list of those who need to go. As you consider the agenda of eugenicists (their purposes have not changed even though they have tempered their rhetoric), all who are poor, handicapped, elderly, or infirmed will be marked for extermination – basically, everyone who is a detriment to their depraved New World Order. You’ll recall that Hades followed the rider of the pale-green horse, and so we realize that these souls who are in heaven are only a small portion of those who have been killed under the Antichrist’s program – the souls of the others are in Hades awaiting their final judgment.

To each of the faithful, who have been martyred by the Antichrist, is given a *white* robe when they arrive in heaven. *White* comes from the Greek word *leukos*, which means that it is like a light that is so bright that it appears to be dazzling and

⁴ Friberg Lexicon.

⁵ Strong’s Online.

radiant.⁶ This is the word that is used to describe the Lord's garments when He was transfigured before Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:2); it is evidence of purity and innocence.⁷ Even though the elder of Sardis was on the verge of apostasy, Jesus said that there were still some within his assembly who would walk with Him in *white* (same Greek word) because they were *undefiled* (Revelation 3:4); white robes are reserved for those who are faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ unto the end (Mark 13:13) – for those who remain *in Christ*. When the Lord returns to establish His millennial kingdom, the armies that follow Him are “clothed in fine linen, white [*leukos*] and clean [pure]” (Revelation 19:14).⁸

When John heard it announced that the time was come for the wedding of the Lamb and His Bride, the *ekklesia*, he was told that it has been given to her that she should clothe herself “in fine linen, clean [pure] and white [*lampros*]: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:8).⁹ Whereas *leukos* describes the brilliance of the garment, *lampros*, while still including the brightness, goes further to describe the garment itself as being magnificent;¹⁰ these are the garments of the saints of God in heaven. However, before we leave this subject of the heavenly garments, we need to consider this statement more carefully: *the fine linen is the righteousness of saints*. *Righteousness* is from the Greek word *dikaioma* (*dik-ah'-yo-mah*), which is not an adjective that is describing someone but, rather, is a noun that points to the concrete expression of righteousness.¹¹ Therefore, the *fine linen* is actually the righteous acts of the saints (noun), which flow out of their righteous character (adjective). Yet we have carefully learned that we are “saved through faith; and that not of [ourselves]: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9); truly, our salvation is all of God, and nothing of ourselves. However, when we come to the Lord in faith, we are to “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness [holiness of the truth]” (Ephesians 4:24).¹² This *new man* has been made by God in *righteousness* and *holiness*, and we are to clothe ourselves in this new creation from God; “if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature [creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).¹³ When we are *in Christ*, we **believe**

⁶ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁷ Strong's Online.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

¹¹ Vine's "justification."

¹² Stephanus 1550 NT.

¹³ Strong's Online.

with a desire to be like Him, and willingly and joyfully clothe ourselves in His righteousness and holiness – they are ours as long as we remain in Him! Nevertheless, God, in His mercy, has not left us without resources; our faith in the Lord brings the Holy Spirit to abide within us in order to, among other things, guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

We have been assured that there is “no condemnation to them which are **in Christ Jesus**, who walk ... after [according to] the Spirit ... God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the **righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us**, who walk ... after [according to] the Spirit” (Romans 8:1-4).¹⁴ As we permit the Spirit of God to guide us (i.e., we are living in obedience), then God’s righteousness will be expressed through our lives. It is as we are willingly living in obedience to His Word that this righteousness is ours; it is nothing of our doing, rather, it is God working in us to accomplish His purpose to have us live out His righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 2:10). Therefore, when we read that the *fine linen* is the *righteous acts of the saints*, we must understand this to be God’s righteousness that has become a part of us because of our obedience to His Word. We are told that Abraham did not waver, but was “strong in faith, giving glory to God ... that, what he [God] had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Romans 4:20-22); Abraham believed God (faith), he acted upon that persuasion (obedience), and was accounted as being righteous. It is through our obedience to the Word of God that the righteousness of God becomes ours, and the *fine linen* of righteous deeds is being prepared for us; yet unfaithfulness can strip us of this marvelous potential (Ezekiel 18:24; Hebrews 3:12).

Jesus declared: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will of my Father** which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). The key to the kingdom of heaven is a faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that changes our behavior so that we live in obedience to Him (doing the *will of my Father* comes only through the guiding presence of the Spirit of God – John 3:5); we may never prophesy in His name, never cast out a devil, nor perform a miracle, but if we simply do what He desires of us, then, and only then, are we accounted as being faithful to the Lord. Faith and obedience are forever linked: faith

¹⁴ Strong’s Online.

leads, and obedience follows; therefore, faith in Christ that is not accompanied by a life of obedience to His commands is a dead faith, and accomplishes nothing (James 2:17).

What we must recognize is that the faith of these who are at the foot of the altar in heaven was a living faith, clearly accompanied by righteous living that led to their deaths under the rule of the Antichrist. How do we ensure that such a living faith is ours? “Examine [test] yourselves, whether ye be in the faith [are you living according to *the faith*?]; prove your own selves [examine yourself to be sure that you are genuine according to the Scriptures]” (2 Corinthians 13:5a).¹⁵ We must test how we live to be sure that we are not hypocrites (professing one thing but really believing something else), and we must, more significantly, ensure that what we believe (the foundation of faith and actions) is in keeping with God’s Word. Jesus warned: “Take heed [be continually discerning so] that no man deceive you [lead you away from the truth]” (Matthew 24:4).¹⁶ Once the utmost importance of remaining faithful to the Lord has seeped through into our deepest thinking, then we will recognize the significance of spiritually avoiding those who teach a message that is not completely in line with God’s Word (Romans 16:17). In our day, when Ecumenical thinking has infiltrated everything Evangelical, this will require us to turn away from the radio and TV preachers, and the literature propagated by most “Christian” organizations and missions; we must not listen to them or read their literature in hopes of being enlightened concerning the truths of Scripture – that is opening ourselves to their spiritual error that we are commanded to avoid. Instead of listening to, or reading the literature of these whom we are to avoid, it would be better for us to spend that time in reading the Word of God. Let me say again: do not accept my teaching at face value, but take it back to the Scriptures and evaluate it accordingly, and then, if it agrees, do it; if it doesn’t, let me know, for my goal is to remain faithful to God’s Word.

As these souls of those martyred under the Antichrist are given their white garments, someone in heaven tells them that they should *rest* for a while, for they will soon be joined by others who are yet to be killed as they were. *Rest* means to be still or quiet; they had just loudly implored the Lord to bring His judgment against those who had killed them, but they are told that they should be still, for the Lord is not finished with what is happening on the earth.¹⁷ Within their admonition to *rest*,

¹⁵ Strong’s Online.

¹⁶ Strong’s Online; https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.

¹⁷ Friberg Lexicon.

they are told to wait for a short time for there are others who will also be killed; once the Lord's determination of martyrs is filled, then He will take steps to impose justice for their blood that has been shed.

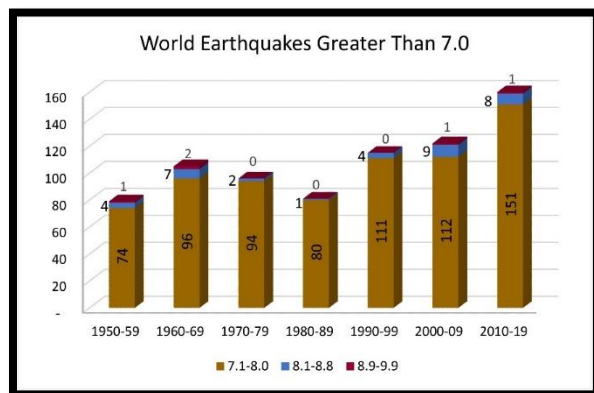


12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; **13.** And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. **14.** And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. **15.** And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; **16.** And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: **17.** For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6)



When the Lord Jesus opens the sixth seal, there is much that takes place within the earth. The first four seals were opened to reveal the Antichrist and three of his assistants and the extensive devastation that will take place upon the earth. The riders of the red, black, and pale-green horses will bring murder, famine, and pestilence upon the earth – the last rider alone will bring death to one-quarter of the world's population. The Antichrist will come as the savior of the world, but he will set out to eliminate, as much as possible, everyone who opposes him, with his sights set particularly against the saints of God (Revelation 13:7). This is in keeping with Satan's declared war against the children of God (Revelation 12:17), and is clear evidence that he is empowering the Antichrist (Revelation 13:2). Along with the devastation of the earth, we saw the souls of the martyred saints gathering in heaven (seal five), and the Lord's assurance that He is in control of exactly how many will be martyred for their faith (Revelation 6:10).

The opening of the sixth seal brings a remarkable change in what is taking place upon the earth. The first four seals provided insight into the activities of the Antichrist and his henchmen against the world, and the fifth seal revealed the price that many of God’s children will pay during this time; however, as we come to the sixth seal, we see a shift toward God beginning to actively orchestrate events on the earth. It’s not that He has not been overseeing the happenings of the first seals (as He oversees all things), it’s just that we now see things unfolding that are directly

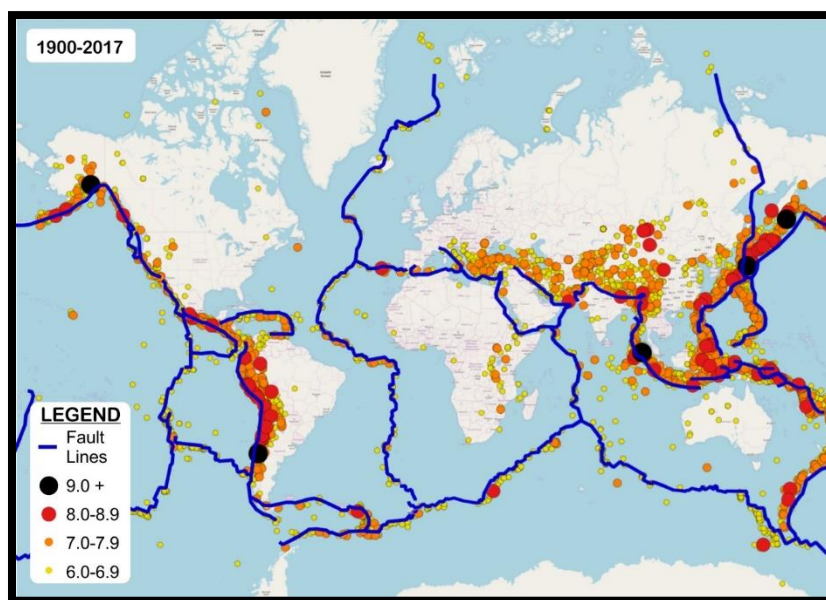


attributable to His actions – and, interestingly, mankind will also recognize this fact. Therefore, we need to proceed slowly and carefully so that we are able to understand exactly what is taking place during this time.

The first thing that comes with the opening of this sixth seal is a *great earthquake*. As Jesus expounded on the

end-time events to His disciples, He said that one of the signs would be “great earthquakes ... in divers [all] places” (Luke 21:11).¹⁸ It is difficult to determine whether there has been an increase in earthquake activity in recent years; the complication is that since the 1970s there has been a dramatic increase in the number of seismic instruments around the world that are recording the earth’s tremors.

However, a consideration of only the larger earthquakes does show that there is a general upward trend (those greater than a 7.0 that are more likely to have been recorded all along – chart above).¹⁹ Although the trend is not terribly significant at this point, the total for the past decade (2010-



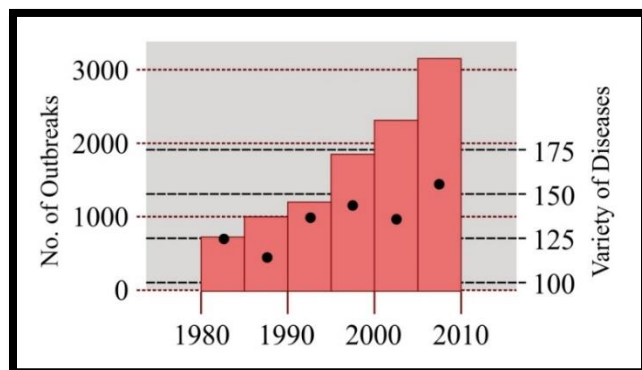
¹⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

¹⁹ Data collected from: <https://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/search/>

2019) indicate that we had an increase in the number of tremors; in reality, over the past 70 years, the charted quakes have more than doubled. Although the majority of the earth's quakes occur along the major fault lines that circle the globe, there are many that take place well away from these faults – in effect, there is no place on earth where it is not possible to be subject to an earthquake.

To His disciples, Jesus added that there would be famines and plagues or epidemics (*pestilence*) all around the world, and that all of these together (including the earthquakes) would be the *beginning of sorrows* (Matthew 24:7-8). *Sorrows* comes from the Greek word *odin* (*o-deen*'), which literally applies to the increasing pains of childbirth that culminate with the delivery;²⁰ in this case, we understand that there will be increasing earthquakes, famines, and plagues in the world that will build to a climax.

Unlike the earthquakes, the number of famines over the past century have actually decreased dramatically due largely to increased agricultural production, global trade, and consequently, a reduced cost for food.²¹ However, where famines have occurred, for the most part they are directly attributable to political restrictions not permitting the necessary provisions to flow through to those in need; in other words, today's famines are man-made.²² Although the present statistics seem to work



contrary to our anticipation of increased famines being one of the signs of the Lord's soon return, the ease by which famines can be caused by man means that the global control by the Antichrist could change this virtually overnight. Considering the rider of the black horse, it seems inevitable that under the Antichrist's rule, famines will become very

severe – if not globally, then at least in a significant portion of the world.

Pestilence is what we might term a plague or an epidemic, a disease that is widespread among a population of people, an endemic where an epidemic remains consistently high, or a pandemic – a rapid increase in a disease on a global scale.²³

²⁰ Strong's Online.

²¹ <https://ourworldindata.org/famines>

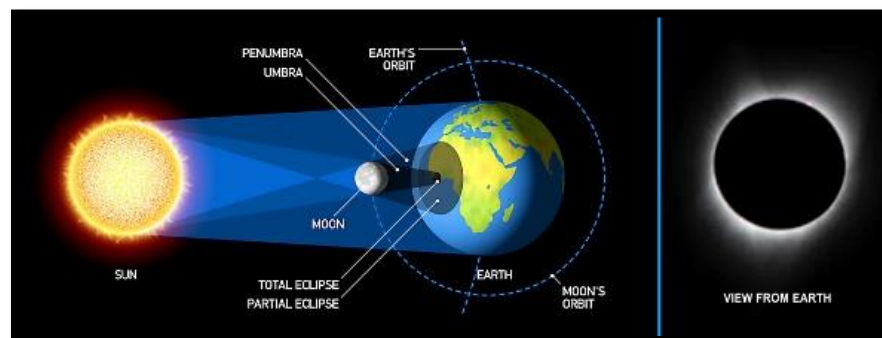
²² Ibid.

²³ <https://journalistsresource.org/studies/society/public-health/global-rise-human-infectious-disease-outbreaks>

Globally speaking, there is an increase in diseases that are considered to be epidemic, with an ever growing possibility of them becoming pandemic (the COVID-19 virus is the latest example); among the main factors contributing to this shift is a greater global mobility, increased world-wide urbanization (making the spread of disease very easy), and a rising migrant population who can carry new diseases to peoples who are vulnerable.²⁴ Once again, political-will is a significant factor in either exacerbating or alleviating the possibility of a pandemic; the description of the rider of the pale-green horse shows that pandemics will be part of his arsenal to reduce the world population by one quarter.

However, beyond these more general markers of the time that is coming, we are told of some very specific things that will take place; together, these are all pointing to the same event: the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven to gather His elect together to be with Him. The earthquakes, famines, and epidemics are all called the *beginning of sorrows* – a time of increasing discomfort and misery that is leading up to a momentous occasion. The signs then shift from this world (earthquakes, famines, pestilence) specifically to the sun, moon, and stars; with the opening of the sixth seal, a great earthquake is mentioned, but the focus goes immediately to the lights that God created for the earth. At the time of creation, God made the sun, moon, and stars “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years” (Genesis 1:14); this is a time when God will use them to convey His *signs*.

The sun will be *darkened* (Matthew 24:29; Mark 13:24) and will become as *black as sackcloth of hair* (Revelation 6:12). *Darkened* is from the Greek word *skotizo*, which means to become dark; i.e., the sun will not shine.²⁵ John tells us that the sun will be *black (melas)*, and likens its blackness to *sackcloth of hair*, which is a dark, rough fabric that was typically made from the hair of goats.²⁶ From these accounts, it is clear that the sun will stop shining – it will be black! When the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross, we are told that “from the sixth hour there was darkness

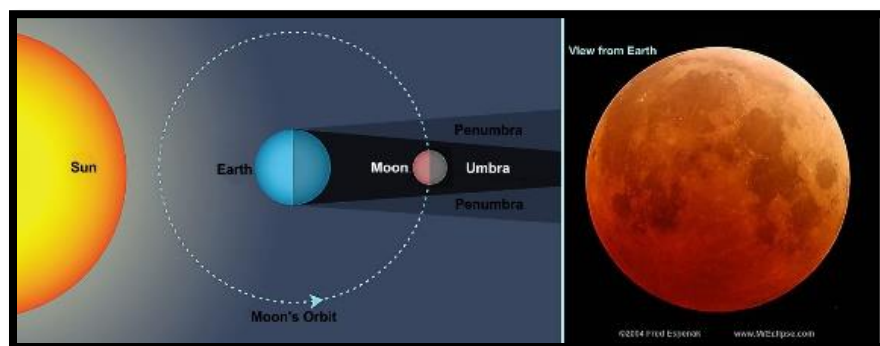


²⁴ <https://www.vox.com/2016/5/31/11638796/why-there-are-more-infectious-disease-outbreaks>

²⁵ Strong's Online.

²⁶ Friberg Lexicon; Strong's Online.

[*skotos* – where there is no light] over all the land [or the earth] unto the ninth hour” (Matthew 27:45); as Jesus suffered under the burden of sin, the sun ceased to shine for a period of three hours.²⁷ At the end of this three-hour period of darkness, Jesus relinquished His spirit to the Father and died, thereby forever breaking the power of Satan (Matthew 27:50; Hebrews 2:14); this defeat of the devil was a fulfillment of the promise that Jehovah made to him in the Garden (Genesis 3:15). There are those who ascribe this three-hour period of darkness to a solar eclipse; however, that is not possible for two reasons: 1) a solar eclipse cannot occur during the time of a full moon, which is the phase of the moon at the time of the Passover, and 2) during a solar eclipse the sun continues to shine, the moon comes between the earth and the sun to hide the sun for a very short time in a very small locality. In this case, the sun is *darkened*. As Jesus revealed end-day’s events to His disciples, and later to John as well, He did not say just how long the sun would be dark, but the context of each of the passages that we are considering moves directly from the signs in the sun, moon, and stars into the appearance of the Lord from heaven. I would suggest that it will not be for long.



Next we are told that the moon became as *blood*; it does not become blood, but has the appearance of it; the color of blood can vary greatly from a bright red when it's

fresh, to a dark brown or almost black when it has been exposed to the air long enough.²⁸ We've recently come through the rave of the *Four Blood Moons* of John Hagee and so the term *blood moon* has become somewhat familiar to most of us. There is a specific natural sequence that takes place to make the moon appear to be reddish: a total lunar eclipse. When the moon passes into the darkest shadow of the earth (the umbra), it takes on a reddish hue because of the earth's atmosphere; the red light waves (being longer) are able to pass through the earth's atmosphere but are bent as they exit, and so they hit the moon.²⁹ However, if we carefully read the

²⁷ This is affirmed by surviving quotes from Thallus, a secular historian of the day, and Phlegon, a Greek astronomer, and both call it an eclipse (which is not possible); <http://www.geocentricity.com/ba1/no084/crucifixn.html>

²⁸ <http://www.pimall.com/nais/nl/n.bloodstains.html>

²⁹ <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/why-does-moon-look-red-lunar-eclipse.html>

texts under consideration, then we will soon realize that there is more going on here than simply a lunar eclipse. A lunar eclipse presupposes that the sun is shining in its usual brilliance; however, we've just noted that the sun will be black. Therefore, when we are told that the "the moon shall not give her light" (Matthew 24:29), that would be in keeping with a sun that is no longer shining. Perhaps the moon will pass through the colors of drying blood as the light from the sun stops, or the Lord might see fit to give it a reddish color; what we do know is that the moon will not be reflecting its usual light upon the earth.

The last of this triad of signs in the lights of the earth has to do with the stars. The illustration that is used is that the stars will fall to the earth like a fig tree casting its unripened fruit when buffeted by a strong wind. *Stars (aster)*, although most frequently applied to the stars of the heavens, can also refer to the visible planets or to meteorites; the latter seems more likely in this case, since the picture is that they will appear to be cast to the earth in great numbers.³⁰ These streaks of light (meteors) are caused by space debris (meteoroid) entering the earth's atmosphere and burning; if a meteoroid survives its journey through the atmosphere and hits the earth, it is then called a meteorite.³¹ We've all seen these *falling stars* in the night sky, and we may have even witnessed a meteor shower when a number of light streaks can be observed in the sky. However, there are times when such showers turn into what are called meteor storms; the streaks of light (the falling meteoroids) have been observed at a rate of up to 40 per second, or 144,000 per hour!³² Such observations have been made throughout history; as early as AD 902 it was recorded that the "stars fell like rain."³³



Great Leonid Meteor Storm,
1966

Beyond the signs that John sees in the lights of the heavens, he notes that the heaven *departed* (it is split or swept aside) and all of the mountains and islands are moved out of their places.³⁴ Throughout recorded history, there have been many

³⁰ Gingrich Lexicon; Jude 13 refers to *wandering stars (aster)*, which refers to the planets that are visible from earth (<http://www.icr.org/article/wandering-stars/>); however, meteors are often called *falling*, or *shooting stars*, which would find a better fit in this case (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falling_star).

³¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falling_star

³² <https://www.space.com/13613-leonid-meteor-shower-peak-1966-storm.html>

³³ <https://leonid.arc.nasa.gov/history.html>

³⁴ Gingrich Lexicon; Friberg Lexicon.

great earthquakes, the sun has been darkened (for example, on the day of Christ's crucifixion), the moon has appeared to be red as blood, and there have been massive meteor storms, but, through John's testimony, this will be very unique. His observation is that all of these significant events will take place **together** when the sixth seal is opened.

John then records that the people of the earth will try to hide themselves in the caves and among the loosened rocks of the shifted mountains, and they will call on the mountains and rocks to fall upon them because they know that the wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ is about to fall upon the earth. It is interesting that they would rather die than face the Lord; they still do not understand that they cannot avoid standing before God. Even when encountering imminent hardship, they call out to the mountains instead of to the Lord.

Now it's time to fit what we have learned here into Jesus' narration in Matthew.



29. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: 30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matthew 24)

This is a summary of Revelation 6:12-14; Jesus informed His disciples that the sun would be darkened, the moon would fail, the stars would fall, and the heavens would be shaken. However, as Jesus explained the end-time events to His disciples, He went on from these signs to a very important event: the *sign of the Son of Man* will appear in the heavens. This is something that only Matthew records, and it is followed immediately by “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 24:30). Although we are not told what that *sign* will be, there are some clues as to what it might be. As the Lord led Israel out of Egypt, He went before them in a visible cloud (Exodus 13:21). When Jesus took Peter, James, and John up into the

mountain, we are told that a *bright cloud overshadowed them*, and God in heaven identified Jesus as His Son in Whom He was *well pleased* (Matthew 17:5). As the disciples watched Jesus ascend to heaven, a *cloud received him out of their sight* (Acts 1:9), and it was told to them that He would return in a similar fashion (Acts 1:11). John sees Jesus *clothed with a cloud* (Revelation 10:1) and, at the time of the harvest of the righteous, Jesus is said to be sitting upon a *white cloud* (Revelation 14:14). Matthew and Mark state that the Lord will come in *clouds* with His angels (Matthew 24:30-31; Mark 13:26-27), Luke says that He will come in a *cloud* (Luke 21:27); the former include the presence of His angels, which could explain why there appears to be more than one cloud. It seems that the sign will be a cloud, and it will be sufficiently unique so that everyone will know exactly what it is.

After delineating the dramatic changes that will take place in the heavens, we read the words: *and then* or at that time (Matthew 24:30).³⁵ When these heavenly signs have taken place, at that moment the Lord Jesus will appear in *great glory* to be seen of all men, and all of the peoples of the earth will beat their breasts in grief (*mourn; kopto*).³⁶ As John began his record of the Revelation, he said the same thing: “Behold, he [Jesus] cometh with clouds; and **every eye shall see him**, and they *also* which pierced him: and **all kindreds of the earth shall wail** [*kopto*] because of him” (Revelation 1:7).³⁷ There are two things here that we need to understand: 1) Jesus will return and be seen by everyone in the world, and 2) there will be a great expression of grief from those who are in the world because they understand what is happening.

As Jesus warned His disciples that there would come some who would claim to know where to go in order to find the Lord; He said: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matthew 24:27). Jesus is saying that when He returns, He will be highly visible, even as lightning can be seen by many, and is clearly identifiable; when He returns, everyone will know exactly what is taking place. When Jesus was brought before the Jewish religious leaders, and they sought for a viable reason to have Him condemned, they asked Him specifically if He was the Messiah (*the Christ*, the Anointed), and His response was: “I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Mark 14:62). The promise to these men who were intent upon having Jesus put to death, is that they

³⁵ Strong's Online.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

will see Him sitting in heaven, and coming in the clouds; this is evidence that those who are in Hades, that place for the spirits of the unrighteous dead, are able to see Jesus seated on the throne of His Father, and will see Him returning in the clouds of the sky to gather His own. **Everyone** will see the Lord returning and, just as surely, they will all know exactly what is taking place.

The people of the world will see the sign of the Son of Man in the heavens and they will *mourn*; the Greek word is *kopto*, and means to beat one's breast as a sign of great grief or remorse.³⁸ Such a deep expression of regret will come because the unsaved will all recognize that they have missed the only means of salvation that is available to mankind. It is unmistakable that everyone in the world will know exactly what is happening when the Lord Jesus returns in the clouds of the air. Many things will take place when He comes, which we will look at in a moment, but the unrighteous in the world will have a full realization that they have missed out, and they will cry out to the mountains and rocks to cover them (Revelation 6:16). They recognize Jesus, yet their only desire is to be hidden from Him so that they will not have to face His wrath, which they somehow know is about to be poured out upon the earth (Revelation 6:17).

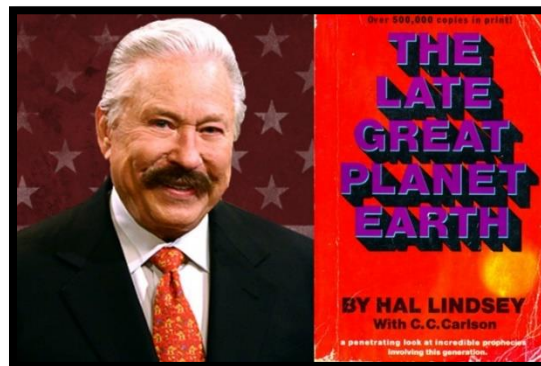
As Paul explained to the Corinthians the centrality of the resurrection to our faith in Christ, he went on to teach them about when the Lord Jesus Christ will come to gather His children from the world: "Behold, I shew [am telling (present tense), with a sense of laying things out in an orderly fashion] you a mystery [that which has been unknown in the past]; We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed [transformed], In a moment [*atomos*, an indivisible amount of time], in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed [transformed]. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).³⁹ In this passage, which follows Paul's explanation on the necessity of the resurrection to our faith, there is a focus on the change that will take place for all of those who are in Christ – there will be a change from mortality to immortality as we receive our glorified bodies. To the Thessalonians, who were fearful that they had missed the Lord's return, the focus is more on ultimately gaining an eternal relationship with the Lord; yet Paul is describing the same event in both cases. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout [a command, call, or summons], with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise

³⁸ Friberg Lexicon.

³⁹ Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

first: Then we which are alive [*living*] *and* remain [*surviving*; those left behind] shall be caught up [snatched] together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).⁴⁰ Before we are transformed in an instant, the Lord will descend from heaven, the archangel of God will shout a summons, and a single trumpet of God will sound, and then, in an indivisible amount of time, we (both the dead and living in Christ) will all find that our bodies have become glorified like unto the Lord’s!

Within the minds of all of those who have bought into the “silent rapture” theory, **everything** takes place within that indivisible moment of time; by *everything* I mean Christ returning in the clouds, the trumpet call, the resurrection of the departed saints in immortality, the transformation of the living saints into their immortal bodies, the angels gathering all who are the Lord’s from one end of heaven to the other, and then all returning to heaven with the Lord. In his book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey popularized this concept: “... in the Rapture, only the Christians see Him – it’s a mystery, a secret. When the living believers are taken out, the world is going to be mystified.”⁴¹ That is not what the text says, but unfortunately, that is what many have come to believe without taking a moment to test his theory. It is interesting to note that when writers, such as Lindsey, make such grand claims as this, they most often do so without showing any supporting Scriptures.



Hal Lindsey and his best seller

Both of the Scripture passages to which we have just referred, mention a trumpet; as is frequently the case, what God ordained for the children of Israel provides us with some insight into exactly what the role of the trumpet will be within the context of Christ’s return. Moses was told: “Make thee two trumpets [*chatsots^{er}rah*⁴²] of silver ... that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow *but* with one *trumpet*, then the princes, *which are* heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee” (Numbers 10:2-4). Notice that at the

⁴⁰ Friberg Lexicon.

⁴¹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 143.

⁴² The most common *trumpet* was the *shofar* (*showphar*), or ram’s horn; we lose the differentiation in English; Strong’s Online.

sound of the trumpets (both of them) *all* of Israel was to come together to the tabernacle, but when only one trumpet was sounded, only the *princes* of the people would assemble. What is almost too obvious to mention is that everyone in Israel would hear the sound, whether it was the one trumpet or both of them. What does this mean within the context of our study? Twice in the Revelation we are told that Christ, Who has cleansed us from sin, has made us to be *kings and priests* unto God (Revelation 1:6; 5:10). For the moment, let's take a closer look at the word *kings*; it is from the Greek word *basileus*, which can mean a king, a prince or a commander.⁴³ The faithful in Christ are children of the King; we are *princes* of the eternal God who will one day hear the sound of a single trumpet of God – that is our summons to be gathered to Him! All of the world will hear the sound, but only those who are *in Christ* are called. However, it will not just be the sound of a trumpet that will invite us to join the Lord, His angels will fan out from one end of heaven to the other to *gather together* all of those who are His.

We are told that the Lord will come in *the clouds of heaven* (Matthew 24:30), *the clouds* (Mark 13:26), *a cloud* (Luke 21:27), or *with clouds* (Revelation 1:7); all fulfill the words of the angels to the disciples: “this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11). Each of these identifies the Lord as coming in the air, but there is no indication that He sets foot upon the earth. As a matter of fact, Paul's comfort to the Thessalonians was that we (all of the faithful in Christ) will be caught up, transformed to meet the Lord *in the air*, and be with Him forever. This is the Bridegroom coming for His Bride, Who will then join Him in marriage for all of eternity. Within the Jewish tradition, a man and woman would be betrothed for a period of one to two years, depending on the situation, during which time the man would be preparing a place where he and his wife would live. The house was generally an addition to the family home of the man's father.⁴⁴ Throughout this time the woman would be preparing for her upcoming role as wife, as well as being ready for the coming of her husband at any time; “But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matthew 24:36). When the house was completed, the man would then make the journey to claim his wife, and together they would go to the place that the groom had prepared to begin their lives together. Jesus said, “In my Father's house are many mansions [a place to stay, a room]: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And

⁴³ Strong's Online.

⁴⁴ <http://www.tasc-creationscience.org/content/ancient-jewish-wedding-missing-link-christianity>

if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).⁴⁵



1. And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. (Revelation 8)

A silent heaven sounds like an impossibility for we have been told that the living creatures are continually praising the Lord (Revelation 4:8), there are innumerable angels who are not silent in their praise of the Lord (Revelation 5:11-12) and out of the throne of God come “lightnings and thunderings and voices” (Revelation 4:5; 11:19; 16:18). From John’s observations, the dwelling place of the Lord is not quiet.



Nevertheless, when the Lord Jesus opens the seventh seal, we are told that there is *silence in heaven* for about a half hour. *Silence* – no voices, no thunderings, no praises, only quietness. What is it that would cause the dwelling place of the Lord Almighty to fall silent?

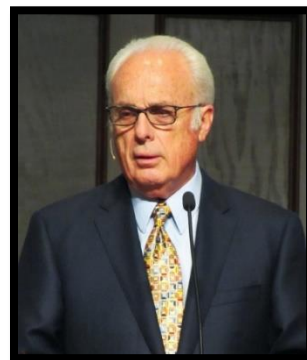
When the Lord returns in the clouds to resurrect and gather His own from the earth, He is coming in the company of angels. He will “send his angels ... and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds” (Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27). When the Lord Jesus comes for the harvest of the righteous from the earth, all of His angelic hosts will be with Him – heaven will be emptied of all of the spirits of the dead in Christ (they will be with Him in order to receive their glorified bodies), the glorified OT saints will be anticipating their completion with the NT saints (Hebrews 11:40), and the angels of heaven will be working with Him to accomplish this historic task. Is it any wonder that heaven is quiet?

The time given for this quietness in heaven is a half hour, **not** an indivisible amount of time. This confirms that when the Lord comes in the clouds for His Bride, it will not be completed in an instant; as already noted, it is the transformation into immortal bodies that will take place in the *twinkling* of an eye, but the sounding of the trumpet, the call of the archangel, and the gathering of all of the holy ones of God will take some time. It’s not that God couldn’t accomplish all of this within an instant, but it seems evident that it is His purpose to make these events slow enough so that everyone will know exactly what is taking place. “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all

⁴⁵ Gingrich Lexicon.

kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him” (Revelation 1:7). When the Lord appears in the clouds, the day of salvation is ended; although the peoples of the world will mourn, they will do so in vain. Like Esau “when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears” (Hebrews 12:17), they will *wail* because they now recognize the folly of their ways, that they have been left behind forever (*rejected*), and that they are now without hope for eternity (*no place of repentance*). “To day if ye will [should] hear his voice, [ye should] harden not your hearts, as in the provocation [*rebellion*; a reference to Israel’s unbelief after being miraculously led out of Egypt]” (Hebrews 3:15); “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).⁴⁶ The only time that we can be assured of is *now*, which is why it is so important that we not procrastinate when it comes to our relationship with the Lord.

Do not be taken in by those who claim that the Lord’s coming for His own will be a *mystery* to the unsaved on earth,⁴⁷ or that His coming for His own will be completed so suddenly that no one will hear or see anything. A church with a fairly solid statement of faith has this on their website: “The Rapture is also a secret event in the sense that it will occur suddenly and be unannounced to the world. There will be no forewarning. It will take place at God’s appointed time and it will take the world by surprise. **It will be over before the world has time to realize that it happened**” (emphasis added).⁴⁸ Even the “prince” of expository preaching, John MacArthur, says: “We’re snatched out of this fallen world, and we’re literally rocketed through faster than the speed of light, rocketed through the air.”⁴⁹ Why does he promote this fallacy? “We’ve got to go through there quick [*sic*], because who is the prince of the power of the air? Satan.”⁵⁰ He thinks that, because Satan is *the prince of the power of the air*, he might try to interfere with the rapture, and so the Lord will hasten the process so that it will be all over before he knows it. Satan was defeated at the cross by the Lord Jesus Christ; the Victor will not make haste in the presence of the vanquished!



John MacArthur

⁴⁶ Strong’s Online; Friberg Lexicon.

⁴⁷ Lindsey, p. 143.

⁴⁸ <http://www.middletownbiblechurch.org/proph/questrap.htm>

⁴⁹ <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/52-18/what-happens-to-christians-who-die-part-2>

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The opening of the seventh seal will see the gathering of all of the faithful in Christ in their eternally glorified bodies, and they will abide with the Lord forever. From this time until the Lord returns to establish His millennial reign, the earth and all who are in it will be entirely Satan's, and it is upon them that the Lord will pour His wrath. Satan has been working since the Garden of Eden to have the world and everyone in it for himself, without any interference from God. In the Garden, he had all of the human beings in the earth (Adam and Eve), but the Lord immediately stepped in and provided mankind with a means of restoring their relationship with Him. Now that the Lord has removed His people from the earth, Satan will have his desire, but it will be a time of judgment from the Lord.