

“Avenge Us or Hide Us?”
Revelation 6:9-17

Two Sundays Ago: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (First Four Seal Judgments)

- White Horse (First Seal): Christ? Military conquest? The Gospel? The Antichrist?
- Red Horse (Second Seal): War
- Black Horse (Third Seal): Famine/Economic Upheaval
- Pale Horse (Fourth Seal): Death (by sword, famine, pestilence, wild animals)

Today: “Avenge Us or Hide Us?” (The Fifth and Sixth Seals)

Outline:

6:9-11 – The Fifth Seal (Martyrdom)

6:12-17 – The Sixth Seal (Widespread Destruction/Terror)

6:9/ “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.”

The four views of the Fifth Seal (Martyrdom):

- Preterist: The martyrdom of believers by Jewish priests in the first century
- Historicist: The martyrdom of believers under Diocletian in the fourth century
- Idealist: The martyrdom of believers from the first century until the Second Coming
- Futurist: The martyrdom of believers during the Tribulation period

G. K. Beale, “These saints are all those believers who have suffered for their faith (“slain”) likely figuratively including all forms of suffering and persecution ... Such sufferings are not meaningless, but are part of God’s providential plan that Christians should pattern their lives after the sacrificial model of Jesus ...”

- Mk. 8:35, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”
- Lk. 9:23-24, “And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”

George Ladd, “When Jesus taught that a man to be his disciple must deny himself and take up his cross, he was not speaking of self-denial or the bearing of heavy burdens; he was speaking of willingness to suffer martyrdom. The cross is nothing else than an instrument of death. Every disciple of Jesus is in essence a martyr; and John has in view all believers who have so suffered.”

6:10/ “They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

How do you harmonize this prayer with Lk. 23:34, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” and Acts 7:60, “Lord do not hold this sin against them”?

God's Vengeance:

1. Not just an Old Testament concept. 2 Tim. 4:14, "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds."
2. Vengeance is God's job, not ours. Rom. 12:19, "Beloved never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,...'" Why?
3. The martyrs are asking for vengeance after doing God's will (especially appropriate).
4. "The cry for vengeance is not incompatible with the prayer to forgive, as a God of mercy is also a God of justice for the unrepentant."

6:12/ "When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood..."

The four views of the Sixth Seal (Widespread Destruction/Terror):

- Preterist: The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Josephus: the Jews hid in caves. "They were not able to lie hidden either from God or from the Romans" (*Wars*, 6:7:3).
- Historicist: The political and spiritual revolution of the Roman Empire (Constantine)
- Idealist: The Second Coming of Christ
- Futurist: Certain symbolic and literal disasters of the Tribulation

6:15/ "(They) hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains..."

G. K. Beale, "Idolatry commenced in the garden with Adam's choice to find his security without God and his independence from God in the fruit of the forbidden tree ... Idolatry is *still* the fundamental sin of men and women ... it is always expressed in attachment to created things rather than the Creator ... Some forms of idolatry are obvious—worship of other gods, various forms of addictions, and so on. But others are not. Is it possible to practice idolatry without knowing it? Satan's most powerful deceptions are often his subtlest. Is it possible for something to be idolatrous to one person and not to another, depending on the attitude with which it is approached?"

Psalm 46:1-3, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth give way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling."