

05-22-2016

Message: Be Patient, Brethren, Until the Coming of the Lord

Text: Revelation 6:1-17

Introduction

- A. God might have several things He wants different ones of us to take away from His Word in Revelation chapter 6 today, but one thing I feel confident He wants us all to take to heart is captured by the exhortation of James ...

James 5:7 Therefore **be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord**. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 **You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near**.

- B. Why the call to patience, patient endurance? We can take comfort in seeing from the visions of Revelation 4 & 5 that our God is in control, that God has appointed what happens in the future (as seen in the scroll with 7 seals in His right hand of power), that He has given all power and authority in heaven and earth to His Son, Jesus Christ, to execute all that God has appointed to take place, as symbolized by His taking the scroll and breaking its seals.

Revelation 5:1 I saw **in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals**.

Revelation 5:6 And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth. ⁷ And **He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne**.

- C. The Christ Who loves us, who died for our sins and rose for our justification is in control. The Christ who dwells in our hearts by His Holy Spirit, who enables us to do all things through the strength He supplies is in control. So why do we need by His grace to be patient and strengthen our hearts for a future He controls?

I. 6:1-8 Because God has appointed Christ to execute every one of His intermediate judgments upon the world while His church is in the world.

- A. When in chapter 6 Jesus breaks the seals of the scroll containing all that God has ordained/appointed for the history of the world, the breaking of each seal does not merely reveal from the scroll what God has appointed to happen, but executes all that God has appointed to happen.
- B. In verses 1-8 the breaking of each seal unleashes God's intermediate judgments, foretastes, and thus warnings, of God's final judgment at Christ's return. John sees with the

breaking of the first 4 seals riders on 4 horses of different colors (roughly corresponding to the colors of chariot horses in Zechariah 6:1-8) afflicting the world with wars and conquests, with killings, famine, pestilence, death and the grave.

1. 6:1-2 Seal #1: The White Horse of Conquest

Revelation 6:1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."² I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and **he went out conquering and to conquer.**

2. 6:3-4 Seal #2: The red horse of slaughter

Revelation 6:3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come."⁴ And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, **it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another;** and a great sword was given to him.

3. 6:5-6 Seal #3: The black horse of famine

Revelation 6:5 When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had **a pair of scales** in his hand.⁶ And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "**A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius;** and do not damage the oil and the wine."

4. 6:7-8 Seal #4: The pale horse of death

Revelation 6:7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."⁸ I looked, and behold, **an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him.** Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

C. Jesus is not merely revealing God's future judgments upon the world - our Sovereign God has appointed them and Jesus Christ is executing them on God's behalf. The reason God knows the future is not because He peers into and learns the future, but because he appoints and executes the future. This calls for patience, because the future includes God's intermediate judgments on the world while the church is in the world.

D. Interpreting Revelation 6 - Parallelism with the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24; Mk 13; Lk 21)

Revelation 6

Matthew 24 (Mk 13; Lk 21)

1. 6:2 wars, invasions, conquests

1. 24:6,7a wars, invasions, conquests

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| 2. 6:4 slaughter | 2. 24:6,7a slaughter (implied) |
| 3. 6:5,6 famine | 3. 24:7b famine |
| 4. 6:8 death (by sword, famine,
disease, beasts) | 4. 24:7b; Lk 21:11 earthquakes, famine,
disease |
| 5. 6:9-11 martyrdom | 5. 24:9 martyrdom |
| 6. 6:12-17 Christ's return (eclipse of
sun, moon, falling stars,
heavens and earth split/shaken,
despair among the nations) | 6. 24:27-30 Christ's return (eclipse of sun,
moon, falling stars, heavens
shaken, despair among the
nations) |

Matthew 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

Matthew 24:6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. 7 "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. 8 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. 9 "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

II. 6:9-11 Because God has appointed believers to suffer, even unto death for the Word of God and their Witness to Jesus.

- A. Compare 6:4 (sphazo = to slay, slaughter) with 6:9,11 (sphazo, apokteino = to kill) - God's appointing that men would slaughter one another includes men slaying believers!

Revelation 6:4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay (sphazo = to slay, slaughter) one another;

Revelation 6:9 When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar **the souls of those who had been slain (sphazo) because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; ...**

Revelation 1:9 I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos **because of the word of God and the testimony (marturia) of Jesus.**

- B. Know that God is not absent nor asleep nor uninvolved nor indifferent to the injustice they have suffered, any more than when His Son was slain. Christ is now present, executing God's appointments to suffering and martyrdom, calling his martyred ones to patience.

Revelation 6:10 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.

- C. 6:9-11 Such suffering by believers does not indicate they are separated from the love of God. The martyred saints are under the altar, the place where the sacrificial blood of acceptable offerings to God is poured out. Ex. 29:12; Lev 4:7 Given white robes - 3:4,5,18. Christ's suffering and death did not indicate he was separated from the love of God. Our suffering while remaining faithful to Christ will not separate us from the love of God in Christ.

Revelation 2:10 '**Do not fear what you are about to suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. **Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**.¹¹ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.**'

Romans 8:35 **Who will separate us from the love of Christ?** Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE **SLAUGHTERED** (sphazo)."

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that **neither death**, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord**.

III. 6:10-17 Relief and vindication from suffering and persecution will come when Jesus comes.

- A. The question of 6:10 is answered in 6:12-17. We should be patient, because relief will come.

Revelation 6:10 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?**"

Revelation 6:12 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?**"

B. Notice the parallel with Jesus's description of His Second Coming in His Olivet Discourse.

Matthew 24:29 "But immediately after the tribulation of those days **THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.** 30 "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. 31 "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other. ...³⁵"**Heaven and earth will pass away,** but My words will not pass away.

C. Application: Behavioral and attitudinal outcomes desired by Christ for His church.

1. Don't be misled, be sound in judgment - there is no secret coming of Christ, no escaping tribulation until Christ comes in glory.

Matthew 24:4 And Jesus answered and said to them, "**See to it that no one misleads you.**" ...²⁴ "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect."²⁵ "Behold, I have told you in advance."²⁶ "So if they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go out, *or*, 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' **do not believe them.**²⁷ "For **just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.**²⁸ "Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

2. Don't be frightened, God is with you

Matthew 24:6 "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. **See that you are not frightened,** for those things must take place, but **that is not yet the end.**

Revelation 2:10 '**Do not fear what you are about to suffer.** Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

3. Don't be disillusioned. Christ in Revelation 6 and His Olivet Discourse is telling us these things are part of God's plan.

1 Peter 4:12 **Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you;** 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at

the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

4. Don't sleep, but be prepared for Christ's return

Matthew 24:42 "**Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.**

Revelation 3:2 "**Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain,** which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 'So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. **Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.**

5. Don't grow cold, endure by faith

Matthew 24:12 "Because lawlessness is increased, **most people's love will grow cold.** 13 "**But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.**

6. Don't quit, be patient. In 2002, 14 years ago, I preached a series on Revelation. I saw this book as particularly helpful to Christians suffering for their faith, particularly in lands to which we were sending our missionaries. Along with equipping those we were sending, I was hoping that understanding Revelation would prepare us here at home for any eventual persecution for our faith, but wondering if in the absence of any real persecution, American Christians see any real application in these visions.

But now I sense something different, because I think we can all see the storm clouds coming as our culture is so quickly turning against Christianity - a post Christian (not pre-Christian culture). Some Christians have already suffered for their faith in a way that was not occurring 14 years ago.

James 5:7 **Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.** The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 **You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.**