

53. No Place to Hide

Following the signs in earth and heaven, what was the next dramatic event in the vision of the sixth seal?

"And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." Revelation 6: 14.

The signs mentioned up to this point in the vision of the sixth seal have all been fulfilled. There has been "a great earthquake." The sun has been darkened at noon-day and the moon has been seen as if it were blood. The stars have fallen. All these are past. The event here described introduces the actual coming of Christ in triumph. In the story of the seals, therefore, we stand today between the thirteenth and the fourteenth verses of the sixth chapter of the Revelation. When the time for the majestic appearing of Christ comes, the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll and the Lord, with His glorious retinue, will descend through the parted skies.

What terrestrial convulsions will ensue as Christ approaches the earth?

"And every mountain and island were moved out of their places." Revelation 6: 14.

On earth, vast terrestrial disturbances will accompany the return of Christ. (Compare Isaiah 24:1,20; Jeremiah 4:23,24; Nahum 1:5) This rolling up of the heavens and the accompanying convulsions on the earth are parts of the universal "shaking" which God declared through several prophets would accompany His final judgments. (Haggai 2:6,7; Hebrews 12:26,27; Haggai 2:21,22; Joel 3:16; Isaiah 13:13.)

How will the inhabitants of the earth be affected by the return of Jesus?

"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 rocks of the mountains." Revelation 6:15.

The book of Revelation is rich in sevens and here the reactions of seven different classes of people on the earth are listed. The kings of the earth, who for so long have kept a tight hold upon their dominions, see their kingdoms crumbling into ruin before a greater King. The great men, who have had a vested interest in the established order, see that order dissolving before their eyes. The rich men realize that all their accumulated wealth now avails them nothing and are ready to cast it out as trash into the streets. The chief captains, who prided themselves on their knowledge of strategy and tactics, find themselves impotent against the Lord and His heavenly munitions. Bondmen and freemen are no longer conscious of their former status amid the terrors of the divine visitation. All who are not at peace with God, whether high or low, great or small, realize that the hour of judgment has found them utterly unready. Uncontrollable terror seizes them. In desperation they rush to hide themselves.

For what do they appeal?

"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sits on the throne." Revelation 6:16.

Stricken with terror they begin to pray. But it is not the prayer of faith. It is a cry of despair to the unhearing rocks to shield them from the consuming glory of the One whom they have refused to acknowledge. They were blatant enough in their blasphemies while God remained veiled from mortal sight. They arrogantly denied His activity in history; they even denied His existence. Now their lies provide no refuge as they frantically seek to hide from His presence.

A recent writer on the peril of modern atomic warfare strikingly entitled his book, No Place to Hide. How much more appropriately may this be said of the "great and terrible day of the Lord." For while defenses may be devised even against the devastating atomic bombs, there will be no shelter for the wicked from the overflowing wrath of God in the day of the world's judgment.

For the people of God, on the other hand, there will be a safe refuge in the cleft of the Rock of their salvation. (Psalm 18:2; 31:3; 62:2,6; 94:22)

But just as the door of the ark was shut before the destroying flood came, so the way to the Rock of salvation will be closed before the final judgments of God are poured out. There will be no access for those who wait until the day of wrath before they seek its shelter. Now, therefore, we must enter that refuge. If we will cry now to the Rock of our salvation, we shall not cry to the rocks to cover us in the day of God's wrath. But if we pass by the Rock unheeding to-day, we shall be among those who cry in vain in the day of judgment.

How will the horror-stricken sinners describe the judgment which comes upon them?

"The wrath of the Lamb" Revelation 6:16.

That there should spring to the lips of the wicked as they go down in destruction the cry, "the wrath of the Lamb," is significant indeed!

When Jesus was first manifested to the world, John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God ' which takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29. After His ascension the appeal was taken up by the "apostles of the Lamb" Revelation 21:14. But the saving ministry of the Lamb has been largely refused. He has waited long and patiently, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3: 9. He still waits to-day, but in this vision we are carried forward to the time when the day of grace will have ended, and the attitude of the Lamb to an incorrigibly rebellious world will have changed from mercy to wrath. Here the Lamb comes to do "His strange work; and bring to pass ... His strange act." Isaiah 28:21.

Judgment is an unnatural act on the part of God; but it is a necessary one, for He cannot tolerate sin forever. His universe must be cleansed, and because men will not accept cleansing by the blood, it can be cleansed only by the purging of judgment.

In what other words do they describe their fate?

"The great day of His wrath is come." Revelation 6:17.

Down the ages the wicked have often prepared for "the day" when their carefully laid plans would go into operation and they would, for a season, attain some part of their evil designs. But they leave out of account the fact that God is preparing, too. He has His master plan. He has designated "the day" for divine action, and when it comes it will be irresistible.

For the saints, Jesus' return will be a "glorious" day (Titus 2:13), a time of rejoicing and reward. In it, the "Blessed hope," which they have so long cherished, will become a reality; the inheritance, for which they have so long held the title deeds, will come into their possession. But for the wicked it will be a "terrible" day (Joel 2:11), a day of separation (Matthew 25:32), of condemnation (John 3:18,19), of desolation (Matthew 25:30), for at long last they will drink to the dregs the cup of the wrath of God.

What question will too late spring to the lips of the wicked?

"Who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:17.

If they had asked this question before, they would not have lacked an answer. Would not the psalmist have told them: "He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; ... he shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of His salvation"? Psalm 24:4,5.

Would not Malachi have declared very plainly: "Behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven. And all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall"? Malachi 4:1,2.

But they did not ask and now, even if they were apprised of the necessary qualifications for standing in the day of the Lord, it would avail them nothing. For probation has closed. The harvest is past. The last sheaves have been garnered in. All who are still outside are lost forever. (Jeremiah 8:20).

How vital then, that while probation still lingers we face up to, and settle for ourselves, this most important and most urgent question which can come into the mind of man.