

990530 PM APPROACHING HOOFBEATS #5 GUIDE  
**HOW TO FACE PERSECUTION**  
**FOUNDATIONS FOR NO REGRET LIVING**  
**REVELATION 6**

Did you know that becoming a Christian has always meant a ticket to persecution? The pages of the history of the church are stained with the blood and tears of countless saints. The story of the Old Testament saints is no less blood stained. The writer of Hebrews wrote the Spirit of God's Divine record of the suffering that has flowed from the Garden of Eden to the last Old Testament prophet John the Baptist.

## **THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIBULATION**

(Matt. 24:4–14)

The events described in this section are “the beginning of birth-pangs” (Matt. 24:8). The image of a woman in travail is a picture of the Tribulation period (Isa. 13:6–11; 1 Thes. 5:5). Let's consider some of the significant events that will occur at the beginning of this period.

- *GLOBAL FALSE TEACHING* (vv. 4–5). The Jews have often been led astray by false prophets and false christs. The rider on the white horse in Revelation 6:1–2 is the Antichrist, that final world dictator who will lead the nations astray. He will begin his career as a peacemaker, signing a covenant with Israel to protect her from her enemies (Dan. 9:27). Israel will welcome this man as their great benefactor (John 5:43).
- *GLOBAL WARFARE* (v. 6). Note that wars are not a sign of the end. There have always been wars in the world, and will be until the very end. Wars of themselves do not announce the end of the age or the coming of the Lord.
- *GLOBAL FAMINES* (v. 7a). War and famine usually go together. Revelation 6:6 suggests terribly high prices for staple foods, for a “penny” was a day's wages.

- *GLOBAL EPIDEMICS* (vv. 7b-8). Earthquakes help to create famines, and both help to cause epidemics that take many lives.
- *GLOBAL PERSECUTIONS* (v. 9). Christians have always been hated by the world, but here we have an acceleration of persecutions and murders. All nations will be involved. This certainly was not true in the history of the early church.
- *GLOBAL CHAOS* (vv. 10–13). Those who once were true to each other will betray each other. This suggests that marriages, homes, and nations will be torn asunder because of lack of loyalty. Lawlessness will abound (Matt. 24:12), for even the law enforcement agencies will not be able to keep the peace. (Matthew 24:13 has nothing to do with personal salvation in this present age of grace. "The end" does not mean the end of this life; it refers to the end of the age)
- *GLOBAL EVANGELISM* (v. 14). Revelation 7:1–8 teaches that God will choose and seal 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will carry the kingdom message to the ends of the earth. This verse does not teach that the Gospel of God's grace must be spread to every nation today before Jesus can return for His church. It is the Lord's return *at the end of the age* that is in view here. Matt. 24:14). Those believers on earth during this terrible period, who endure in their faith, will be saved when the Lord comes at the end and delivers them.

Even though most of the time we in America are unaware of it, there is a growing hostility for Christians around the world. Here is an overview of the situation:

- Middle East: A decade ago, Islamic fundamentalists had an uneasy religious "truce" with Western expatriates who came to work for them, particularly in the oil-rich nations like Saudi Arabia. They tried to keep the Westerners, mostly Christians of one degree of commitment or another, restricted from the rest of the populace. Still, the impact of a handful of expatriates and a small yet organized church has been tremendous. The presence of US troops during the Gulf War increased the effect dramatically, and the ongoing presence of troops has exacerbated it. But it's the evangelization of the Middle East that really causes problems. Islamic extremists are responsible for a new wave of attacks on Westerners. An increased level of persecution has been noted, with the murder of Mehdi Dibaj (Iran) and the harassment of Robert Hussein in Kuwait. just the tip of the iceberg.

- North Africa: The country of Sudan in northern Africa has perhaps the worst record of persecution in the world. The government's professed goal of total Islamicization of the country has led to a state of civil war between the mostly Christian and animistic southern regions and the Muslim north. Government atrocities are numerous, and include aerial bombardment, massacres, slavery, and even reports of crucifixions. Many of those killed fall under the definition of martyrdom. Others in northern Africa have also attacked Christians, particularly where radicals are agitating for civil governments to implement Islamic law. In a well-known case earlier this year, several monks were kidnapped and murdered as part of the ongoing hostilities between the Algerian government and the Armed Islamic Group, the leading opposition.
- Eastern Asia: The continuing persecution of Chinese believers is well documented. Churches have been bulldozed with believers inside. Pastors have been arrested, humiliated and executed. Christians have been threatened and imprisoned. In fact, the new waves of persecution are so rampant that the United Nations has recently set up a special fax line for incoming reports of atrocities, so it's Human Rights Commission can react more quickly to them. Representatives of several organizations, including Amnesty International and Voice of the Martyrs, have testified before the US Congress, calling for economic and political measures against nations that persecute Christians.
- Latin America: Missionaries have been attacked as "soft targets" by the various structures of sin-drug lords and terrorists in particular. It was with much relief that the Christian world was able to report the release of Ray Rising, a Wycliffe missionary kidnapped in Colombia. Unfortunately, the mission station from which he was taken had to be closed and moved due to ongoing security threats. Other Christian workers have been kidnapped, and mission agencies have had to adopt a very difficult policy-refusing to pay ransom. Agency executives agree that giving in to these demands would only cause a rash of kidnappings. Missionaries going into insecure situations know they must rely on God's help and grace.
- Africa: Because of their stand for Christian principles of freedom and democracy, and because of their untiring work in the name of Christ on behalf of the poor, oppressed and

persecuted, many Christians have been martyred in political and ethnic conflicts. There are many incidents in Rwanda, Burundi and South Africa where missionaries, pastors, priests, churches, monasteries, and seminaries have been specifically targeted. In Rwanda's genocide alone, half a million Christians were martyred.

Now as we look at Revelation 6 we are looking at the Tribulation, the first step in Christ's taking back the earth, which is rightfully His. One by one Christ unrolls the seals. As each seal is broken, He takes further possession and control of His inheritance. Finally, "the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever'" (11:15). When He unrolls the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet blows, the earth is His.<sup>1</sup>

JESUS' DESCRIPTION of the Tribulation in (Matt. 24: 3-34) exactly parallels the seals of Rev. 6!

Listen to this account of the trail of blood God's saints have trod, stand with me as we read Hebrews 11: 32-40

Well, how much more do I need to say? It would take too long to recount the stories of the faith of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah and David and Samuel and all the other prophets. 33 These people all trusted God and as a result won battles, overthrew kingdoms, ruled their people well, and received what God had promised them; they were kept from harm in a den of lions 34 and in a fiery furnace. Some, through their faith, escaped death by the sword. Some were made strong again after they had been weak or sick. Others were given great power in battle; they made whole armies turn and run away. 35 And some women, through faith, received their loved ones back again from death. But others trusted God and were beaten to death, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free—trusting that they would rise to a better life afterwards. 36 Some were laughed at and their backs cut open with whips, and others were chained in dungeons. 37 Some died by stoning and some by being sawed in two; others were promised freedom if they would renounce their faith, then were killed with the sword. Some went about in skins of sheep and goats, wandering over deserts and mountains, hiding in dens and caves. They were hungry and sick and ill-treated—too good for this world. 39 And these men of faith, though they trusted God and

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<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

won his approval, none of them received all that God had promised them; 40 for God wanted them to wait and share the even better rewards that were prepared for us.

*So that is what happened up to the time of Christ. What happened after? Hebrews 10:30-39 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. 33 Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. 34 You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. 35 So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. 36 You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. 37 For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. 38 But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him." 39 But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

So what is the record since the Cross? How has the church fared? Let's pick up with the 12 Apostles.

## **HOW EACH APOSTLE AND SOME WELL KNOWN LEADERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH DIED**

During the first persecution of Christians by Emperor Nero, Christians begged Peter not to expose his life which was considered necessary to the well-being of the church. Finally, Peter consented to depart from Rome, but as he fled along the Appian Way, about two miles from the gates, he was met by a vision of the Saviour traveling towards the city.

Struck with amazement, he exclaimed, "Lord, whither goest thou?" The Saviour, looking upon him with a mild sadness, replied, "I go to Rome to be crucified a second time," and vanished. Peter immediately turned back and reentered the city.

All of the apostles were insulted by the enemies of their Master. They were called to seal their doctrines with their blood and nobly did they bear the trial.

- ✓ Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia.
- ✓ Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.
- ✓ Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.
- ✓ John was put in a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterward banished to Patmos.
- ✓ Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward.
- ✓ James, the Greater, was beheaded at Jerusalem,
- ✓ James, the Less, was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller's club.
- ✓ Bartholomew was flayed alive.
- ✓ Andrew was bound to a cross, whence he preached to his persecutors until he died.
- ✓ Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies.
- ✓ Jude was shot to death with arrows.
- ✓ Matthias was first stoned and then beheaded.
- ✓ Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death at Salonica.
- ✓ Paul, after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

Columbine Cassie Bernall martyred as Christian.

Rachel Scott shot in leg by Eric Harris and asked if she was a christian. When she boldly answered yes Dylan Kliebold shot her dead saying, "Then go be with Him now!"

Perpetua and Felicity Foxes Book

## **Missionary, two sons burned to death in India**

News Date: **January 25, 1999**

Australian missionary Graham Stewart Staines, 58, was burned to death in his car Saturday along with sons Philip, 10, and Timothy, 6, after a crowd doused their car in gas and lit it outside a church in the town of Manoharpur in the eastern Indian state of Orissa.

Information sent from Voice of the Martyrs sources in India say that Staines had been working with leprosy patients in India for 34 years. His sons were visiting on vacation from school.

The attack comes amidst rising persecution of Christians in India. Yesterday, five more missionaries were beaten in Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh. The missionaries were handing out tracts and pamphlets when they were attacked.

It is unknown why the attack on Staines and his sons took place, though reportedly five members of Bajrang Dal, a militant group affiliated with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have been arrested. Staines was in the area to attend a "jungle camp" organized by a local church there.

Reportedly, the militants attacked the vehicle armed with bows and arrows after warning village residents not to interfere. People from the village who tried to help the missionary and his sons were beaten by the mob.

India's Prime Minister, was quick to condemn the attack. Staines' wife, Gladys, told reporters she was upset by the attack on her husband, but not angry with the men who committed the crime. Monday at a memorial service for her husband and sons, Gladys and her daughter led the congregation in singing:

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow.  
Because he lives, all fear is gone.  
Because I know He holds the future,  
And life is worth a living just because He lives.

## **SEAL #1: FALSE PEACE (vv. 1-2)**

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."<sup>2</sup> And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

✓ This is a picture of the release of Antichrist into the world scene; a white horse; its rider has a bow and crown, and he goes forth to conquer.

- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON? JESUS IS THE ONLY WAY, TRUTH & LIFE (14:6) - HE GUIDES US, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY ENDLESS LOSTNESS.**

## **SEAL #2: WAR (vv. 3-4)**

When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

- ✓ The red horse; a great sword given to the rider; peace taken from the earth (vs. 3-4) speaks of the unmasking of Antichrist who brings a false, superficial peace. But at this point, peace is removed from the earth and the time of killing begins (cf. Ezk. 38:21). One estimate counts 143 separate wars and more than 12 million dead since 1945.
- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON? JESUS IS THE DOOR OF SHEEP (10:7,9) - HE ADMITS US TO LIFE, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY HOPELESS EXCLUSION.**

## **SEAL #3: FAMINE (vv. 5-6)**

When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.<sup>6</sup> And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

- ✓ A denarius was one day's wage (or fifteen cents). A slave would work a whole day and earn fifteen cents. Here we see that one meal of wheat or three meals of barley will cost an entire day's wages. Now that's famine! All a man's money will go to buy food. A terrible famine is going to hit the earth.
- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON? JESUS IS THE BREAD OF LIFE (6:35) - HE SUSTAINS US, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY UNSATISFIED HUNGER.**



## **SEAL<sup>2</sup> #4: DEATH (vv.7-8)**

When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."<sup>8</sup> So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

With the breaking of this seal, one-fourth of the population of the world is going to die. As a green (greek chloros as in chlorine) horse: death, and hades follows. Death receives the bodies and hades the souls of unbelievers. Death may refer to pestilence (Scott, Ironside, Gaebelein). beasties of leuvenhook microscope

Up until 40 years ago there was no way anyone could kill one-fourth of the world. Today "beasts of the earth" are multiplying by the trillions in laboratories boiling in the cauldron of hatred in the Middle East and before long, they will spill out into the deadliest hour of the planet. So deadly are these beasts that Jesus said in Mark 13:20 "And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days."

- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON?** WITHOUT JESUS THE RESURRECTION AND LIFE (11:25) - HE PROVIDES US LIFE, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY ENDLESS DYING.

## **SEAL #5: MARTYRS (vv.9-11)**

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 testimony which they held.<sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"<sup>11</sup> Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

- ✓ When the fifth seal is broken, martyrs who died because of their faith during the Tribulation are seen under the altar in heaven,

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, p.

praying for Christ to take back the earth and avenge their blood. These are the souls of those who are slain during the Tribulation period on account of their testimony to the Word of God. The terrible martyrdom of Rev. 6 are much clearer to us who have lived through or pondered the horrors of World War II.

The atrocities of Nazi war criminals' discrimination -- ghettos concentration camps -- mass extermination; In 10 years, 60% of Jews in Europe, 6 million, were butchered. G. M. Gilbert wrote in his history of the criminal trials of those criminals called the Nuremburg Diary: "...the torture, the starvation, the mass murder, the diabolical experiments on live human guinea pigs. 'History,' he said, 'does not record a crime perpetuated against so many victims or ever carried out with such calculated cruelty.' 'Mass murder,' he said, 'was becoming a State industry, with byproducts.' That is only one page from the sordid story of modern persecution. There are many pages more. The world is getting ready for the breaking of this seal.

What is shown here, under the breaking of the fifth seal, is elaborated further in chapter seven, where the great tribulation is introduced. Here only a preview is given of the terrible persecutions which will engulf the globe in a coming day." What leads to such faithfulness even to death? One thing: Faithfulness to Christ in life.

- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON? JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF WORLD (8:12) - HE ILLUMINES US, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS.**

## **A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PERSECUTION OF BELIEVERS**

### **First, Persecution is inevitable for Christians:**

- Matthew 5:11-12 *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*
- Mark 10:29-30 *So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the*

*gospel's, 30 "who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.*

- *1 Thessalonians 3:2-4 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, 3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this. 4 For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know. 1 Peter 4:12,*
- *2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*
- *1 Peter 4:12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;*

## **Second, we are called to participate in the sufferings of Christ:**

- *Acts 5:40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.*
- *Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,*
- *Philippians 3:10-11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*
- *1 Peter 2:20-23 For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;*
- *1 Peter 4:12-16 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the*

*name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter*

## **Third, God's Word promises wonderful treasures for those who face persecution:**

- **DEATH WILL BRING PEACE AND REST.** - Isaiah 57:1-2 The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. 2 He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.
- **GOD WILL BRING JUSTICE WHEN JESUS RETURNS.** - 2 Thessalonians 1:5-7 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. (NIV)
- **LEADS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY.** - James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (NIV)
- **PERSECUTION EARNS US HEAVENLY REWARDS** - James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (NIV)

## **Fourth, God uses persecution for His purposes:**

- **PERSECUTION OFTEN SPREADS THE GOSPEL TO OTHER PLACES.** - Acts 8:1,4 On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (NIV)

- **PERSECUTION IS TO REVEAL JESUS IN US.** - 2 Corinthians 4:7-11 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. (NIV)
- **PERSECUTION ENCOURAGES OTHERS TO BE MORE COURAGEOUS IN THEIR TESTIMONY.** - Philippians 1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. (NIV)
- **PERSECUTION OF SAINTS ALWAYS GLORIFIES CHRIST.** - 1 Peter 1:7 These [all kinds of trials] have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (NIV)

## **FIFTH, WHAT ARE PROPER RESPONSES IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION:**

- **LOVE AND PRAY FOR THE ONES WHO ARE PERSECUTING BELIEVERS.** - Matthew 5:44-45 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. (NIV) 1 Peter 3:9 Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. (NIV)
- **CALL YOUR CHURCH TO PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED.** - Acts 12:5 So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.
- **SHOW AS MUCH CONCERN FOR THE PERSECUTED AS FOR THOSE IN YOUR OWN LOCAL CHURCH.** - 1 Corinthians 12:25-26 so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one

part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (NIV)

- **AS YOU PRAY, REMEMBER WHO THE TRUE ENEMY IS.**  
Ephesians 6:12-13, 18 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand... And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (NIV)
- **REJOICE OVER THEIR STEADFAST LOVE OF GOD. - 1**  
Thessalonians 3:7-9 Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? (NIV)
- **EXHORT OTHER CHRISTIANS BY THE FAITH AND EXAMPLE OF THE PERSECUTED BELIEVERS. - 2** Thessalonians 1:4  
Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.
- **STAND SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE PERSECUTED BELIEVERS. ACCEPT PERSONAL LOSS IN ORDER TO SYMPATHIZE WITH THEM. - Hebrews 10:32-34** Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions.
- **REMEMBER THE PERSECUTED AS IF YOU YOURSELVES WERE SUFFERING. - Hebrews 13:3** Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. (NIV)

## **SEAL # 6: CHAOS (vv. 12-13)**

I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the

moon became like blood.<sup>13</sup> And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.

- ✓ **WHAT IS THE LESSON?** WITHOUT JESUS THE GOOD SHEPHERD (10:11) - HE CARES FOR US, APART FROM HIM IS ONLY AIMLESS WANDERING.
- ✓ a great shaking; signs in the heavens, terror on earth.
- ✓ This means earthquake, sun darkened, moon red as blood, meteors, disturbances in the atmosphere and on earth, terror on rich and poor alike.
- ✓ The great day of the wrath of the Lamb came; this clearly identifies the Tribulation period as the wrath of God.

In Revelation 6:15-17, John describes for us the greatest prayer meeting in the history of the world: "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every slave, and every free man (that covers everybody) hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, 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; for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

So what's the bottom line? There are seven years of history left for Israel to complete in God's program. It's a time like never before – demonic creatures ravage the earth; one-half of the population is horribly murdered; earth is a wasteland; mankind fiercely fights against God and tries one last time to destroy Christ – and in that moment, He returns.

- GOD HAS GIVEN TO US THE CONCLUSION TO HUMAN HISTORY- THE BIBLE! Trust Him completely. If people are the only investment that lasts.... invest heavily in disciple making.
- GOD HAS GIVEN TO US A JOB TO DO FOR HIM WHILE HE IS AWAY- SOULWINNING! Therefore, obey Him now. If you haven't started to give out the good news, start today.
- GOD HAS GIVEN TO US A WAY TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH HIM – TIME IN THE WORD! If you haven't started start daily contact in the word and prayer today!
- GOD HAS GIVEN TO US A MEANS TO START AN INVESTMENT ACCOUNT IN HEAVEN – SACRIFICIAL GIVING! Give sacrificially to support His church. God has indicated the earth is doomed so start today.

Pleasing God and making disciples must be a priority!

**REMEMBER WE ARE A SPIRIT WITH A BODY**

Hebrews 12:23 *to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect,*

**SEE BEYOND MERE PHYSICAL LIFE**

2 Corinthians 4:17 *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

**I WILL NOT FEAR. WHY?**

Psalm 23:4 *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

Eye on sparrow

Graves in body bags

747 India creaking, groaning at takeoff

How survive? Be on God's side

God will take some out of harms way (Peter in Acts 12 from prison)

God will take some through harm unscathed (fiery furnace and lion's den)

God will take some home (Acts 12 James; Acts 7 Stephen)