

The Martyrs' Cry!

Revelation 6:9-11

East Berlin Community Church

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April 10, 2022

Introduction

- Christian persecution and martyrdom 2021
- Jesus never promised His followers a care-free, persecution-free life.
 - John 15:18-20-- *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."*
 - John 16:1-3-- *"These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me."*
- Paul agrees that we are not exempt from suffering.
 - 2 Timothy 3:12-13-- *"All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."*

Fifth Seal: *The Martyrs' Cry!*

Revelation 6:9-11-- *"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. 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?' 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."*

A. Review of the first Four Seals

1. **The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**
 - a. Rider on the White Horse: The Antichrist
 - b. Rider on the Red Horse: War
 - c. Rider on the Black Horse: Famine
 - d. Rider on the Pale Horse: Death
2. **Parallels to the teaching of Christ in the Olivet Discourse.**
 - a. Fifth seal described in Matthew 24:9
 - Matthew 24:9-- *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake."*
 - b. This event marks the mid-way point in the Tribulation period.
 - Matthew 24:15-- *"abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place"*
 - Matthew 24:21-- *"great tribulation, such as not has been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."*

B The Fifth Seal: The Martyrs Cry!

1. The PEOPLE who are martyred.

- Revelation 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 testimony which they held."*

- a. **Some believe that they are ALL the martyrs since the beginning of time—Old Testament, Church Age, and Tribulation Saints**
 - 1) Believers who die today are not souls awaiting their white robes, but are already clothed.
 - 2 Corinthians 5:1-5-- *"For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building with God, a house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has also given us the Spirit as a guarantee."*
 - 2) Believers who die today are instantaneously *"with the Lord"*
 - 2 Corinthians 5:8-- *"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord."*

- b. **The "souls under the altar who had been slain" are Tribulation saints—people who come to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord during the Tribulation.**
 - Revelation 7:9-- *"After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hand, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!'"*
 - Revelation 7:14-- *"So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'"*
 - 1) **How do they come to faith after believers today have been raptured?**
 - a) **Regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God**
 - John 3:3-- , *"Most assuredly I say to you that unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*
 - John 3:5-7-- *"Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I say to you, 'You must be born again.'"*
 - Titus 3:4-6-- *"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior."*
 - (1) *Isn't the Spirit of God, the "Restrainer" removed before the Antichrist is revealed?*
 - (2) *It is the Spirit-filled Church which is the restraining force today—and we will be removed.*

 - b) **The Silent Witness of the Word of God**
 - Romans 10:17-- *"faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."*

 - c) **Through the Testimony of Others**
 - (1) *By sharing their own testimonies of faith as they witness to others during the Tribulation.*

 - (2) *Through the preaching of others.*
 - (a) *The 144,000 sealed Jewish Evangelists—Revelation 7 and 14*
 - (b) *The Two Special Witnesses of Revelation 11*

(c) The “Flying Angel” of Revelation 14:6-7

- Revelation 14:6-7-- *“Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.’”*

(3) **BOTTOM LINE: The gospel will be preached world-wide.**

- Matthew 24:14-- *“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”*

2) **What about those who heard the gospel prior to the rapture and reject it? Can they change their minds and be saved during the Tribulation?**

- 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 -- *“The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*
- a) In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul not focusing on those who reject Christ prior to the rapture, but on those who reject Him during the Tribulation and accept the Antichrist instead. These are the ones on whom God sends strong delusion so that they believe the Antichrist’s lies.
- b) Many who have rejected the gospel prior to the rapture will do so afterward.
- c) But 2 Thessalonians 2 does not preclude the possibility that some who heard the gospel prior to the rapture will accept Christ after the rapture. God will use the horrors of the Tribulation to bring millions of sinners to Christ. But they will pay with their lives.

2. **The PETITION of the Martyrs.**

- Revelation 6:10-- *“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.’”*

1. **These Martyrs petition God to enact vengeance on their Christ-rejecting murderers. Prayer moves the hand of God in judgment.**

- Luke 18:6-8a-- *“Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.”*

2. **They appeal to God on the basis of two of His attributes:**

- a. **God is Holy**, and therefore cannot tolerate sin, but must judge it.
- Psalm 5:4-- *“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity.”*
- b. **God is True**, and therefore must be faithful to His word and fulfill His promises
- a. God has promised in His word that *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay”*.
- Deuteronomy 32:35-- *“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten to them.”*
 - Deuteronomy 32:39-43-- *“now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor is there anyone who can deliver from My hand. For I raise My hand to heaven and say, ‘As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me. I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the heads of the leaders of the enemy.’ Rejoice, O*

Gentiles, with His people; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, and render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land and His people."

- Psalm 79:10-- *"Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Let there be known among the nations in our sight the avenging of the blood of Your servants which has been shed."*
- Isaiah 59:17-18-- *"For He puts on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He puts on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies to His enemies; The coastlands He will fully repay."*
- Nahum 1:2-3-- *"God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies."*
- 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 -- *"Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."*
- Romans 12:19 -- *"Vengeance is mine, I will repay!"*

- b. Their question of *"How long"*—not a sign of impatience but of longing for Christ to come and reign.

3. The PROVISIONS for the Martyrs.

- Revelation 6:11-- *"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."*
1. **God gives each of them a "white robe".**
 - Revelation 3:5-- *"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."*
 - Revelation 7:14-- *"...washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."*
 2. **God gives them permission to "rest", and to enjoy heaven's bliss** until the *"number of their fellow servants and their brethren who would be killed as they are, is complete."*

APPLICATIONS FOR US TODAY?

1. The promise made to these martyred Tribulation saints that God will avenge the wrong and make things right applies not only to them, but to us today.
 - Romans 12:19-21-- *"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath: For it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in doing so you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*
2. The power of prayer to move the hand of God today. God moves as we pray.
3. Our responsibility to share the good news of the gospel with those who have yet to accept Him as Savior and Lord.
4. Like the martyred Tribulation saints, we might become impatient that the Lord has not returned yet for us. But He will come again when the number of those who are to be saved prior to the rapture is complete.
 - 2 Peter 3:9-- *"the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*