

1. **Introduction:** Before moving on, we need to consider again the imagery of Revelation 6:12-17 and attempt to understand the descriptive phrases the way John understood them. John's vocabulary and its use were based on a thorough understanding of OT prophecy.

2. **Revelation 6:12-14:** *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,<sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.<sup>14</sup> The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.*

- These verses seem to describe the second coming of Christ which will include both an outpouring of divine wrath on the ungodly and the good news of glorification for believers.
- God's divine wrath is directed against all that is unholy. His character reacts in revulsion and wrath to all who ignore Him and deliberately violate His will. God loves purity, peace, and perfection.
- John's Bible was the OT which commonly uses the type of language found in this passage, uses it not to portray what is going on in the expanse of the sky, but rather what was happening on earth.
- Dramatic, turbulent, unsettled situations among earthly world powers were symbolically portrayed by Biblical writers by depicting violent upheavals in the sun, moon, and stars, and even the expanse of the sky itself (rolling up like a scroll).
- Consider a few examples:

3. **Isaiah 13:8-10** tells of the impending judgment on God on Babylon.

- **Isaiah 13:9:** *For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light.*
- This is a symbolic representation of the earthly disaster that is about to befall Babylon. The statements about celestial bodies no longer providing light represent the destruction of the earthly kingdom of Babylon.

4. **Ezekiel** makes similar statements about the impending destruction of Egypt:

- **Ezekiel 32:7-9, 15:** *When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light.<sup>8</sup> All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord GOD. . . .<sup>15</sup> When I make the land of Egypt desolate, and when the land is desolate of all that fills it, when I strike down all who dwell in it, then they will know that I am the LORD.*

**5. Isaiah describes the destruction of Idumea (Edom) like this:**

- **Isaiah 34:4-5:** *All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. <sup>5</sup> For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.*

6. William Kimball points out in **The Great Tribulation** (p. 166), “when Israel was judged, or when Babylon was subdued by the Medes, or when Idumea and Egypt were destroyed, it was not the literal sun, moon, and stars that were blackened. The literal stars of heaven did not fall from the skies, and the literal constellations were not dissolved or rolled up as a scroll. These figurative expressions were clearly presented in a purely symbolic manner to characterize the destruction befalling nations and earthly powers.”

7. Symbolic language describing a drastic change in cosmic bodies was often used by “OT prophets” to describe God’s acts of judgment within human history. It is the way Jewish imagery referred to major human events to stress their full significance (particularly events related to nations, etc.).

- Revelation 6:12-14 thus uses standard symbolic language for national disaster. John is not prophesying about strange astronomical or geological events. He is predicting that God’s judgment will fall on the entire earth, terminating those who refuse to repent and believe the gospel.
- The symbolic descriptive language about destructive judgment seems to mean that when Jesus returns, He will judge and destroy every political organization that opposes Him.
- He will bring devastation on every government, every army, every nation, every philosophical movement, and every financial institution that attempts to submit to His Lordship or ignore Him as God.
- The celestial (heavenly) and terrestrial (earthly) phenomena used in John’s descriptions are prophetic symbols for national and global catastrophe falling on an unbelieving, sinful world.
- Keep in mind that a believer’s physical body is not, in general, shielded from side-effects of God’s wrath at sin and sinners. Believer’s souls are protected “in Christ.” It is true that on the day that Christ returns, both living and resurrected believers will meet Jesus in the air, thus shielding them from God’s wrath in the final judgment of the ungodly (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).
- A “great day” is coming (Rev. 6:17) when the Lamb’s wrath (Rev. 6:16) will descend on and bring trouble to those not “in Christ.”

8. **Revelation 6:15-17:** *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, <sup>16</sup> calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us*

***and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, <sup>17</sup> for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?***

- The all-encompassing nature of this judgment is illustrated by the language of sevens. There are 7 facets of physical creation mentioned – (1.) the earth, (2.) the sun, (3.) the moon, (4.) the stars, (5.) the sky or heavens, (6.) mountains, and (7.) islands.
- There are also 7 groups of humanity who come under judgment: (1.) kings, (2.) great ones, (3.) generals, (4.) the rich, (5.) the powerful, (6.) slaves, and (7.) and those free.
- Judgment comes to those ignoring God and His behavioral requirements.
- Mentioning 7 facets of physical creation and 7 groups of humanity indicates completeness. The judgment is universal. The disasters produced by judgment wrath are also universal.
- Judgment comes to all based on relationship to Christ regardless of status in society, wealth, influence, power, or armies. Kings and slaves alike are accountable to God.
- It is the height of folly to think it possible to hide from God in caves and under rocks. Only spiritual blindness of sinful people enables them to think they can escape the coming judgment of God.
- In 6:15-17, these people were witnesses to the first six trumpet judgements. They recognize the great day of wrath has come. Judgment is being poured out by ***“him who is seated on the throne.”***
- This sixth seal describes the time of judgment that will end all things. People experiencing that day acknowledged that the final judgment day had come and that there was no escape. No one can avoid it. No one can stand against it. Why do they not repent? It isn't a lack of time or opportunity.

**9. Question:** Do you think people will repent and turn to Christ after they suffer God's wrath toward sin? Revelation 9:20-21 gives the answer for people who survived the dreadful trumpet judgments.

**10. Revelation 9:20-21:** ***The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot see or hear or walk, <sup>21</sup> nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.*** (also 16:9,11. 21)

- This result is a reminder that, without God's intervention, sinners will sin despite bad consequences.
- God's preliminary judgments (like the seal judgments) are acts of grace are intended to shock sinful people by giving them an opportunity to experience the danger of their behavior and repent.

- On judgment day, the truth of sin and its consequences will be obvious to all. Even the great ones on earth will recognize that ignoring God and freely sinning has put them into a bad position.
- For those who ignore God, their day of wrath has come. On that day, they will wish for some way to hide from the face of God and His justice, even calling for the rocks of mountains to fall on them (but of course, even that would not hide them from God).
- Everyone sins! Who can withstand the consequences of God’s judgment?
- On the day of His wrath, it is too late to ask that question, though it has an answer.
- Seek God while He can be found. Confess your sins, turn to follow Him. He will provide a way for you to live forever in His presence.
- Think again about the first 5 seals and our conclusion that they portray different aspects of the history of believers, particularly portraying what believers will suffer in this world that is filled with unbelief and opposition to Christ and His followers.
- What are we to learn from so many people who ignored or deplored the Lord Jesus both while He walked the earth and in the ages since His crucifixion, resurrection, and return to heaven?
- In the final analysis, sinful people don’t want to look at God. The powerful and the weak, the rich and the poor, they all say, ***“Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”*** (6:16b)
- Those who desire God will not be among those who cry out for something, anything to hide them from God’s face. All are sinners and there is only one thing that saves anyone from judgment-day punishment.
- That one thing that saves is God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. God is the source of salvation. Believers are the benefactors.
- Believers know the blood of the Lamb who was slain “ransomed people for God.” Those who have been ransomed love the Lamb and He loves them. “In Him” we are protected and will never be required to suffer the wrath of the Lamb.

11.Next: Chapter 7.