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Introduction: The second half of Chapter 6 continues the description of the opening of the seals of the scroll. We have seen the horses and their riders of the first four seals begin the astounding period of judgment on the earth... *which is coming*. A quarter of the earth's population will die in this time! This is coming! When we look at our world now, see the wars, famines, earthquakes, freak storms, anger and bitterness and rage, immorality, etc.; we sense the "birth pangs" giving us a clue that the time is drawing near. These things are not the end - they are signs that the time of the end is approaching. Prepare yourself! Repent from all that offends God! Walk with Him and serve Him while there is time!

The fifth and sixth seals are covered in the remainder of the chapter (with some elaboration on the martyrs of the fifth coming in Chapter 7). The nature of what is triggered with the opening of these seals is different than the first four; there are no more horsemen riding through the earth (thus the first four can be seen as somewhat of a unit - see previous study). The first four seals had an effect on the conditions and relationships between nations and people on the earth (economies, wars, etc.); the fifth seal brings the focus back to heaven, and the sixth deals with events occurring in nature. Both are related to the continuance of God's judgment being poured out on the inhabitants of the earth.

The opening of the seventh seal will be presented in Chapter 8. That final seal brings about seven trumpet judgments and seven bowl judgments. What you should be able to see by this point is that the Book of Revelation is actually quite simply and logically organized for the reader. Blessed is he who hears and heeds these words (1:3).

1. Verses 9-11 - The martyrdom of "tribulation saints"

- v.9 - The **Lamb**: the Lord Jesus - remember this is He who is triggering all of this judgment. The **altar**: difficult to identify with information outside this scene; it is a heavenly altar in the presence of **God**. Under it are the souls of martyrs. These are not the "church" for they have already been identified. Who are they? When the **fifth seal** is broken, John suddenly sees these souls. Perhaps this signifies that in the wake of all of the catastrophe on earth after the previous seals, the ire of the world turns to those who have believed on Christ in the tribulation period after the Rapture. The world blames God for its trouble and persecutes His servants.

- v.10 - These souls shout to God in a cry for judgment and vengeance.

- v.11 - They are given white robes - indicative of the fact that they are more than just spirits - and are told to wait until the full **number of their fellow servants** was **killed**. *It is possible that every believer in Christ in the Great Tribulation will be martyred.*

NOTE: More consideration will be given to believers during the Tribulation in the study of Chapter 7.

2. Verses 12-14 - Cosmic disturbance and a great earthquake.

- v.12 - A **great earthquake** - this seems to be like nothing the world has ever seen - and earthquake that affects the *entire planet* (see note on v.14). The changing of the appearance of the **sun** and **moon** is perhaps indicative of great atmospheric disturbance. Something cataclysmic is happening unlike ever before. This was also prophesied by Joel and preached by Peter! (Joel 2:30-32, Acts 2:20).

- v.13 - The **stars of heaven** falling could be a reference to a great meteor shower, perhaps the result of a great collision of asteroids with each other or with the moon.

- v.14 - The **sky** rolling up as a **scroll** could be what causes the change in appearance of the sun and moon. The jolting of every **mountain** and **island** indicates worldwide shaking and terror.

3. Verses - 15-17 - The world's reaction to the first six seal judgments.

- vv.15-16 - From the great rulers of the nations down to every common man, the world will be deeply rebuked by these events. Perhaps after the first four judgments their reaction will be to blame the followers of Jesus and persecute them to death. But after the judgment of the great earthquake and cosmic disturbances of the sixth seal, there will be no confusion, no more blaming, no more lack of clarity. The world will know it is being judged by **Him who sits on the throne** and the **Lamb**: Almighty God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ His Son. All they will be able to do is run to the **mountains** for cover.

- v.17 - This verse describes the awareness of the world that it is being judged by God and that no one can escape. *There will be no more atheists or agnostics in the world. There will be no more evolutionists. It's not likely there will be any more religion either.*