

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE FIFTH SEAL

6:9-11

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Revelation 6:9-11

The LAMB Breaks the Fifth Seal

Is heaven really what we *picture* it to be? Or is heaven exactly what God says it is?

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained... Revelation 6:9

The Lamb breaks the fifth seal, but no longer does one of the four living creatures say, “Come”. Instead John is shown a scene or locale. Although this picture is a scene in heaven, rather than on earth, it reveals much about the actual judgment of the fifth seal—which is taking place on earth. Let’s look at the fifth seal judgment...

John sees an altar with souls who had been killed because of the Word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained under it. What altar? We know it is in heaven. We also know that because Jesus was sacrificed once for all, there is no longer a need for an altar of sacrifice. That leaves us with the altar of incense which is identified with the prayers of the saints. The souls referred to are under, or beneath, this altar in heaven. They are in heaven under the *true* altar. The tabernacle that Moses built was made *after the pattern* of God’s tabernacle in heaven, so this is the *true* altar. These souls are crying out in prayer to God—to pray is to appeal or plea to the One who can do something about your situation.

Who are these souls? They are souls who have been slain—martyred. Do you remember what I told you about the words testimony and martyr? These souls were slain because they had witnessed, or testified, about the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. They maintained their testimony, their witness, even though they were obviously persecuted and eventually martyred for it.

...and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Revelation 6:10

The souls under the altar in heaven, who were martyred because of speaking the truth about Jesus and the Word of God, will cry out with a loud voice. This is the same word that was used in Revelation 5 when it spoke of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders all speaking with a loud voice. It is the Greek word *me-gas* and means big, great, and huge.

There is a difference though. The angels, creatures, and elders are all speaking—the Greek word *lego*—which means “message”. What was their message? *“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”* The souls under the altar are crying out, clamoring, or croaking—it is the Greek word *kra-zo*. What are they crying out? *“How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”*

Who are they crying out to? To the Lord—which is the Greek word *des-potes* and means master, lord, slaveowner. These souls know that God is sovereign over their own lives and over the lives of those who killed them. The Lord is the holy and true One—the Righteous Judge.

What do they want from Him? What is their prayer at the altar of incense? Justice! They want God to judge (just as John wanted, and just as every Christian wants)! They don’t want God to wait any longer to avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth. The earth-dwellers in Revelation are not Christians; they are unregenerate persons who have turned their backs on God and run their lives their own way—their own way leads them to kill God’s people.

***And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.* Revelation 6:11**

Did they receive an answer to their prayer? Yes. The answer was a white robe and a command to rest and wait—eventually God would do exactly what they were asking Him to do—He would judge. The Greek word for

robe is *stole* and is a long fitting gown given as a mark of dignity. The fact that it was white might be symbolic of triumph—it seemed they had been defeated by their murderers, but the truth was that they were victors—they had overcome the world through their faith in Christ Jesus.

They were told to rest awhile longer. The Hebrew word for “rest awhile” is *anapauo* and means to cause to rest, to soothe, or refresh. They were given assurance of the final retribution to be dealt out to their murderers which would happen in just a small amount of time—an amount of time that God determined and would not tarry in its arrival.

What will happen during that time frame? Among other things, sadly, the promise is made that more will be murdered—those who are fellow servants and brethren of those under the altar—in the very same way they, themselves, have been... The exact number of those to be martyred is determined; it is decreed; and each and every person to be martyred—will be... but the promise is also sure that there will not be one single martyr more than what is decreed...

What is the major event in this seal? Martyrdom. You can look at each of the seals so far and see a major event. A world leader comes on the scene in the first seal. Peace is taken from the earth and replaced with war in the second seal. The third seal shows us the result of world-wide war as food rationing becomes the norm. The fourth seal reveals global death—the world is overcome by sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts. The fifth seal of judgment shows us what comes in the wake of all of this—martyrdom for true Christians.

There will obviously be a terrible persecution in the future that results in a great number of believers being martyred. The ones who are referred to in the fifth seal, the ones who have already been martyred, are given white robes and told to rest a little while longer. The explanation is that a great number of their brethren must die in the same way they did—through martyrdom.

One of the things I always find interesting in this seal is the contradiction to what we are taught from the time we are little. We are told there will be no more crying when we go to heaven; that God wipes away every tear, right? Wrong. That promise is not made until the end of all things and the new heaven and new earth and new Jerusalem appear. (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation

7:17; Revelation 21:4) That wonderful promise has been taken out of its context and used for personal purposes of comfort.

In the fifth seal the souls under the altar are crying out. What does that mean? The Greek word *krazo* means croaking, wailing, screeching, or screaming. They are *pleading* with God to avenge their blood. This is not figurative—this will happen.

During the fifth seal there is screaming, or screeching, going on in heaven. Does that concern you? Don't you like to think of heaven the way *you've* always painted heaven? We can't. We *have* to let that go. Heaven is how it *is*.

Those in heaven want justice and they know Who to cry to—God. Heaven is like *God* says it is, which is not necessarily like *we* have pictured it. I remember my siblings and myself, as children, asking, “Mommy and Daddy, do they have bunk beds in heaven? Do they have grape juice in heaven?” All kids ask those kind of questions and we heard the standard lie that is way too many times given, “Yes, God knows what you like and it will be there.”

No, no, no, no, no! When we go to heaven it will not be about us—it will be about Him—just like everything, in reality, truly is now. Existence is all about God—not about us.

When we go to be with Him it will not be a picnic—we will go in a glorified body to *serve* Him eternally. That is what the Bible tells us. It will fill us with joy to serve Him. When we see Him as He is, our joy will be made complete to serve Him. *Now* we see as in a mirror darkly and we serve Him through faith because we *know* He's wonderful and excellent, and so we want to give Him excellence in our service *to* Him. But *then* we will understand how much He deserves it. We must not paint a picture of heaven that God did not paint.

Heaven right now is where God dwells in holy righteousness, waiting... Waiting to spend His wrath on His creation that rebelled against Him. Waiting to dwell with those who have submitted to His plan of salvation. And those that are in heaven, what are their concerns? Well, so far, heaven has not been about the departed saints—it has been about worshiping God, and waiting for God to judge the earth.

Vengeance belongs to God and the souls and creatures in heaven want His justice. The question is... will you lay down what you *want*... and what you *think*... and line yourself up with what God says...