



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

### The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Revelation 6:1-17

“Six Seals”

Revelation

TRANSCRIPT

Our text this morning is Revelation chapter 6, and we’re going to look at verses 1 through 17, the entire chapter where the seals of the book of destiny are opened. You’ll remember in chapter 5, the Lamb is found worthy to open the book, which begins the unfolding of the end of history. And that is taken up in chapter 6. This morning before the first service one of the deacons came up to me and was in a very good mood, and was commenting on what a beautiful day it is. The sun is out and it is a beautiful day. What a contrast to the passage we read this morning, where the sun becomes black as sackcloth and the moon red like blood. This is a chapter about judgment, and it begins the unfolding of the apocalyptic portion of the book of Revelation. Well, let’s begin it with verse 1.

“Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, ‘Come.’ I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

“When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come.’ And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

“When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, ‘Come.’ I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.’

“When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come.’ I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death;

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.

“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; 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?’ ”

I want to pause here and make just a brief comment because I'm not going to say this in a lesson itself, but I think it's worth noting. This is a heavenly scene. The seals are being broken and John is seeing things unfold on the earth. But then we come to this fifth seal and he sees heaven. He sees the events there. We sometimes wonder about those who have died, our loved ones. Do they know what's going on earth or are they oblivious to that and simply caught up in the glory and beauty of heaven? I think they're caught up in the glory and beauty of heaven, and yet they have minds far superior to ours and they're not distracted by a number of things. They can focus on the glory of Christ and also the things that are going on earth. I think this makes it very clear that they are aware of what's taking place now, here, and would be very much aware of what's taking place in our homes and with us. Well, these are aware. They know what's unfolding and they're offering prayers, as it were, that God's justice will be established. Verse 11.

“And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a 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.

“I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth *made* of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’ ” May the Lord bless this reading of His Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Father, we come this morning to the first series of judgments in this great book of judgment, and yet this great book of hope, as well. And as we approach this passage, we should remember that we who have believed in Jesus Christ, we who are in Him are safely in Him and this will not touch us. That's only by Your grace, and so we begin by giving You the praise and the thanks, and I suppose, Father, that if there's one great lesson that we should learn from this, one great application to us, it's to rejoice in Your goodness and grace that You have delivered us from the wrath to come. We can stand in Your presence and not be fearful, but be joyful and rest as those who are in heaven are resting now.

And yet, Lord, the reality is tribulation does come to us in this life. We may escape that great tribulation to come, and those who are in it won't be touched by the events of it. They'll be protected by it. Your people will be protected by it. But in this life, we do have tribulation. We go through hard times. Yet we should always remember what the Psalmist said, “It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn your statutes.” And it's through the hard times of life, the difficulties that You do teach us and draw us close to Yourself. And we learn the comfort of the Lamb and we have the assurance of knowing that the One who sits on the throne that will cause the unbeliever to tremble is for us and working everything for our good.

So we give You the praise and the thanks for that. We are safe within Your Son. We are in Christ and we cannot be shaken from Him. I pray that You would bless us with these thoughts and encourage us through our study of this text together. I pray for those that are in difficulty. We pray for those who are sick. We pray for those who have suffered great loss. Lord, we pray You'd prepare our hearts for a time of study and worship together, and we pray these things in Christ's name, Amen.

You know the legend of Pandora's box. She was warned not to open it, but curiosity got the best of her, which shows that the Greeks had some understanding of human nature that commands not to do something are invitations to do that very thing. And she lifted the lid and out flew all of the woes of the world, all the plagues, sorrow, and mischief of mankind.

Well, we come to a kind of Pandora's box in Revelation 6, only it's not a box, it's a book, and it's not opened out of curiosity, but out of deliberate intent. It unleashes all kinds of misery on the earth when the four horsemen come out spreading war, plague, and death followed by three more seals of calamity. History has always been full of wars and famines and plagues. But at its

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

conclusion, they will intensify and herald the end of the world and the coming of the kingdom. That's what the book of destiny is about which the Lamb has taken up. So now Christ, the Lamb who by His death won the right to bring the kingdom to the earth, takes the book and begins the series of events that will conclude in His coming and triumph.

He breaks the first seal and John writes, “I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, ‘Come.’ I looked, and behold, a white horse.” The voice of thunder is one of majesty and power and authority and the angel speaks here with great authority. He speaks with God's authority. He is ordering the events of history to unfold. But thunder also signals storms, and this voice of thunder marks the beginning of the great storm of history, the seven year tribulation on the earth. Christ breaks the first seal, the angel commands in a booming voice, and a horse and its rider come forth. The horse is white. The rider is armed with a bow and is wearing a crown, a stephanos, a victory wreath.

Who is he? That's a question that has been debated from the very early centuries of the church, and one of the oldest interpretations identifies him as Christ and the white horse as the victorious progress of the gospel, which will precede the events of the tribulation. It's an old interpretation and there's some support for it because we read in 19:11 of Christ's second coming, and John sees the heavens open up and a white horse, one sitting on it is Faithful and True. It's the Lord Jesus Christ coming. And it's argued by those who interpret this writer and white horse in that same way that we ought to let the book of Revelation interpret itself and that interprets this for us.

Well, that is a very good method of interpretation, but it seems to me that that method really proves the opposite because apart from the white horse, the two riders are very dissimilar from one another. They hold very little in common. In chapter 19, Christ is wearing many crowns, not one crown, and the crowns that He is wearing are different from this one. The word is diadem. It's the crown of a king. This is stephanos, which is the crown or the wreath of a victor. He has a two-edged sword, not a bow. And also it's a little odd that if you think about it for the One opening the seals to be the one who rides out with the first seal. But also, Christ is out of place in this company. His presence doesn't fit the context. Each horse represents an instrument of disaster, not blessing. And the first seal begins the calamities.

Well, if this is not Christ, who is this rider on the white horse wearing a crown, going out conquering and to conquer? Everything about him indicates that he's some great military

"Practical Christianity" by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

conqueror. In the Old Testament, the bow was a symbol of military power and the horse is the animal of war. Now, he may simply represent war. The other three riders are personifications of a force: famine or pestilence, and that may be so here. And if so, then this simply represents warfare, which will spread across the world. But it may be, and I think this is probably so, that this is war brought by a specific person. He wears a crown. That distinguishes him. The color of his horse suggests a great man.

R.H. Charles in his classic commentary on the book of Revelation identified a number of ancient conquerors such as Xerxes and Julius Caesar as having had white horses. White was a symbol of victory, a symbol of conquest. So this is a future Caesar and since his appearance marks the beginning of the tribulation, we should probably identify him as the antichrist, who will appear as a conqueror. And he will come as a deliverer. The white horse suggests a counterfeit of Christ. I do think there's some connection there. Christ rides a white horse. This one will ride a white horse.

But this one is a counterfeit of the True Rider on the white horse, and he will come at a time when the world is looking for a savior, someone who will bring order to it. We live in an age that's very much like that. The threats of terrorism and nuclear proliferation among rogue states make this world which is unstable anyway very much more unstable. Things can happen in one part of the world that affect the other side of the world the same day. The world has never been like that in its history. These modern times are unique. The world is small, and it's interrelated, and one event can set off a chain of events all over. So we live in a world very much like that, very uncertain, fearful.

And so the hope of someone arising, some strong man that could come on the scene and end that and put things together and give security and reassurance is very real. That hope is very much alive. Well, he will appear in such a time at the right time, riding in, as it were, on a white horse. He comes as a rescuer but will only bring ruin, as such men always do. He has a crown of victory, but it's important to notice that the crown was given to him. In fact, we will notice the sword one of the riders is given to him. These things are given to these individuals, or this individual and the others.

It's a suggestion very clearly that all of this works within the decree of God. It's God that gives him the crown. It's God that gives him the victories that he'll have. And we know from 2

Thessalonians chapter 2 that the restrainer is holding things back, but the time will come in God’s time when that is removed and things will begin to unfold and this man will arise. So we’re reminded all through this text that everything that’s unfolding is the unfolding of God’s plan. It’s the book of destiny that’s being unfolded. The rider goes out to accomplish his plan and purpose, but in doing that, he will only accomplish the Lord’s will.

And that’s the case always. Men always have their agenda, their purpose, what they’re going to do for themselves, whether it’s in the daily routine of life or the great events of government. And what men end up doing is simply carrying out God’s decree. All of this is God’s will. Christ is the ruler of history. He is directing its events. He is the one who will open this book. He breaks the seals and things happen.

In verse 3, He breaks the second seal and the second angel gives the command, “Come.” We read in verse 4, “And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted –” there we have it again, granted or given “ – to take peace from the earth, and that *men* would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.” Now, this is what happens when a man goes out to conquer and gain a kingdom for himself. He ignites the flames of war, which spread to other nations. We see that in our own history. We look back on the last century and the great wars that occurred. The first world war, it was started when one man assassinated another man, the Archduke Ferdinand, in Sarajevo, Serbia, an obscure town in a corner of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and yet very soon all of Europe because of that one event was plunged into a bloody conflict that really didn’t end until after the second world war.

So here one man comes and war follows on the heels of conquest. The war described here involves civil war, which is sometimes lit by a larger conflict. The first world war, for example, was the catalyst for the Russian Revolution. And this second rider is given a sword that produces that kind of conflict, “to take peace from the earth *so that men* would slay one another.” History is filled with this kind of violence, with civil wars and unrest. In John’s day, there were examples of that and in the year 69 – this book was written in the last decade, so 30 years maybe before, in 69 – there was a great civil war in Rome. We think of Rome as this iron empire that brought stability to the world, and it did do that under its iron grip. And yet, within its government, there was chaos in that one year. Nero committed suicide and there followed four emperors in a year’s time until Vespasian came, the fourth emperor, and put things right.

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer’s Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now, civil unrest is not unusual, but in the future, it will be widespread and cataclysmic. The word used for “slay” means “slaughter” or “butcher.” It speaks of a time of terrible carnage. But all of this, anarchy and aggression, is not the end. It only signals the end. This is the beginning of the end.

War, of course, causes other calamities, and in verse 5, the third seal is broken and the angel calls forth a black horse. Now, these colors seem to signify something. They seem to correspond to the missions that these horses and their riders are sent on. White represents conquest, red represents bloodshed, and black suggests the mourning and despair resulting from famine and all of its effects. The horseman is carrying a pair of scales, which is unusual equipment for a horseman. But it refers to weighing out grain. We read in verse 6, “And I heard *something* like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.’” A denarius was a Roman coin, a silver coin, and it was the equivalent to a working man’s daily wage.

And so wheat will be scarce in that time, and the price so inflated that a man will have to spend all of his wages for that day, a whole day’s wages, in order to buy enough to feed himself. Or he could buy the inferior barley and get three times as much and be able to feed his family. The command not to damage the oil and wine suggests that the necessities for the poor will be in short supply while the luxuries of the rich will be plentiful. So the famine of the third seal will cause great disparity between the classes, between the rich and the poor. And, of course, great disharmony within society.

When Christ breaks the fourth seal, a pale horse rides forth. The Greek word here is *chloros*, which means “greenish yellow,” been described as the “sickly color of decay.” Its rider is Death, and Death is followed by his companion, Hades. Albrecht Durer, the great artist of the Reformation, did wood cuts of these great scenes in the book of Revelation, and he did this one, and it’s called “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” And in it, the four riders are furiously racing across the earth with swords and scales swinging. They are trampling people beneath their hooves. And beside Death is Hades, and Durer pictured him as a monster swallowing up everything in his giant jaws that death passed. It swallows a lot.

Authority was given to kill “a fourth of the earth.” Now what is the population of the earth today? At one point, I remember it was 4 billion. I think it’s 5 billion, maybe 6 billion. I’m not

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer’s Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

sure. But if it’s 5 billion, this is a lot of people. This is over 1.25 billion people that die in this first series of plagues. They will be killed “with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.” Death by wild beasts would occur somewhat naturally in that there’s very little food so the animals, the wild animals are scavenging and they begin devouring people. But again, this destructive authority is God-given, and the saints alive at that time will take comfort in that. Not in the sorrow and the suffering that they’ll see, but take comfort in the fact that they’re seeing the hand of God working in history and that He is able to preserve them through it all. IN fact, that’s the promise of Scripture. Psalm 33:18-19 states, “Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness, To deliver their soul from death And to keep them alive in famine.”

Now we should never forget that. That’s the kind of God we have. He’s absolutely sovereign and He is able to protect us in the most dire of circumstances, to deliver their soul from death and to keep them alive in famine. That’s true today. That’s true in the worst of times. Oftentimes, we go through a kind of famine in our life. I use that word metaphorically, but we go through a time when our finances are shaky, we wonder what tomorrow’s going to bring. All kinds of things can occur in life that raise questions about what’s going to happen to me in the near future. Well, remember what the Lord says. His eye is on you. He’s able to keep them alive in famine. He provides for His people. He’s always faithful to us. He will be faithful to us in the worst of times and in the future we have here the assurance that He will be faithful to His people in the very worst of times.

It doesn’t mean that death won’t touch God’s people. It will according to this text here. But also remember, according to God’s purpose. And John’s reminded of that when the fifth seals is broken and he hears the cry of the martyrs beneath the altar in heaven. These are “those who had been slain –” we’re told – this is in verse 9 “– because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;” These are the faithful men and women whose death is valued by the Lord. The fact that their souls are under His altar shows the value that He places on them and shows that He considers their death to be a precious sacrifice to Him.

Now, there’s nothing new in this, of course. There have been faithful martyrs in every generation from the very beginning, the first generation early in the history of the church, within a few years of Pentecost, Stephen was martyred. And many people were martyred following his

death and have been all through the centuries. In fact, it was in the third century that Tertullian made that well-known statement, “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” He was well familiar with the blood of the martyrs. But what he’s saying there is men may try to stamp out God’s work and stamp out His people, but it only flourishes in the midst of that. And so it has gone down through the centuries.

But things will intensify in that future day. Many saints will be slain for the truth and for their faith. And in verse 10, we read their prayer for vindication. “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Now that sounds like an angry prayer for vengeance and not a very Christian prayer, not at all like Stephen’s prayer, who prayed that his stoning would not be held against his killers. But this is not a prayer of vindictiveness, but a prayer of vindication, for God to be proved right, for His truth to triumph, for His kingdom to be victorious, for righteousness to prevail on the earth. These are those – to use the words of the author of Hebrews – of whom the world was not worthy. They suffered a terrible injustice, but not a tragedy. Not at all. Their body is killed, but their souls fly to heaven, to safety, and to a place of honor, and as we’ll see in a moment, a place of rest.

So God takes care of them. It’s all within His plan and we see them honored in verse 11, where they are dressed in white robes. That may be a reference to justification. The robes are given – not earned, but given – because people can’t justify themselves. Only God can justify, and it’s a free gift. It may be that He is giving these robes in recognition of their justification because they’re not justified when they enter heaven. They’re justified at the moment of faith on earth. So this would be a gesture of recognition that they’re His justified ones. They have been clothed in the pure righteousness of Christ. But white is also a symbol of victory. So what this may suggest is that through their faith in Christ, they have been justified, and as justified men and women, they have overcome the world, they have overcome the temptation, overcome it to the point of even being martyred, facing death, and being faithful to the end, and their robes are a token of that.

Well, they’re honored, and then they are instructed and told to rest. They’ve run the race, they have finished the course, and now they have rest. That’s what heaven is. We don’t know a lot about heaven. Think about it. You read through Scripture. A lot of its described in metaphorical terms, but really it’s beyond us. We can’t comprehend the glory and the greatness of heaven. But we know this. It’s a place of rest. Now their rest is “for a little while longer – ” they are told “ –

until *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”

In other words, God has determined the full number of the martyrs. This is not something outside of the plan of God. It all fits within His plan. These are not things going on and taking God by surprise. Their deaths are within His plan. He’s numbered all of our days. He knows when our last day will come. It’s part of His plan. And it shows the concern that He has, the care that He has for His people. These deaths – our deaths – we must all die someday – are not mere statistics. Men count up lives like numbers, just statistics on a sheet of paper or on a newscast.

But not with our Lord. He takes care with all of this and, as I say, there’s no mistake here. This all fits within His plan. God has a plan and a purpose for each life and it ends as He has determined. He’s determined the number of the hairs on our head and the number of the days that we’ll live. For many, it will be in this way that it will end, which God sees as glorious. He sees it as a sacrifice. He honors it. It’s a victory and these individuals enter victoriously into heaven. The tribulation period will be a time when the saints are persecuted severely, just as today is the day when the church is being persecuted. That shouldn’t surprise us, really. We’re surprised by difficulties in life just because we’re not really studying carefully the Word of God, because Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:12 from a prison and to encourage Timothy to run the race and fight the good fight. He said, “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,” 2 Timothy 3:12. That is inevitable for a child of God who is living faithfully for the Lord. But that will increase in the tribulation.

The opening of the sixth seal in verse 12 may be an answer to the martyrs’ question “How long?” because it leads to cosmic catastrophes that herald the end of the world. There is a great earthquake. Mountains and islands move. The sun is darkened. The moon is reddened. The stars fall, all as an announcement that the day of judgment has come. Many interpret these cosmic disturbances figuratively and there’s some reason for that because that’s how the book of Revelation starts. Remember the very first verse John says that these things were signified to him. They were communicated in symbols and signs. And so there is some symbolism here, but many take this as not really cosmic disturbances, but political disturbances and social disruptions. There certainly will be that. But that really doesn’t fit with the response of the people at the end of the chapter who are in mortal terror.

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer’s Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

The physical universe appears to them to be coming apart. They describe the sky as being split “like a scroll” that is torn in two. Now obviously there is hyperbole here. There is a deliberate exaggeration. These events aren’t strictly literal. Stars won’t fall to the earth. That’s obviously impossible. But what appear to be stars certainly could, comets, meteor showers. After all, at the Lord’s crucifixion the land was literally put in darkness for three hours as a sign that God’s judgment was on Him. In fact, there were many unusual literal physical events that occurred at that unusual event, that unique event in history, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. And this second coming which is being heralded here, announced, will be unusual.

If the end of the world is coming, should we be surprised that there will be cosmic disturbances? At Christ’s crucifixion, there was literal darkness on the earth. When He died, there was a literal earthquake. The rocks split and the graves were opened. IN fact, Matthew tells us in Matthew 27 that the graves were open and the dead saints rose and they walked into the city of Jerusalem and presented themselves alive. Quite an amazing thing. So it’s not improbable that literal cosmic disturbances would occur in divine judgment and as announcing Christ’s return.

That’s how I understand that sixth seal. And really, such things have happened before that are very similar to this. There are precedents set by other events that have occurred. In John’s day, the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii in the year 79 would still have been very vivid on the minds of all of these people, Christians in the seven churches, people throughout the ancient world. That had recently occurred. In more modern times, the Indonesian volcano Krakatoa killed over 37,000 people in 1883. It erupted with such ferocity that shock waves reverberated around the world seven times. It blasted 11 cubic miles of ash, dust, and gas into the atmosphere that affected the world’s climate, colored the sun and moon, and turned the skies blood red at sunset for four or five years.

Now we’ve all become familiar in the last few years with tsunamis and the catastrophe they cause. They don’t just happen in the Indian ocean. They can happen in the Atlantic, as well. In fact, some British scientists a few years ago made quite a bit of news when they suggested that if a volcano on the island of La Palma in the Canary Islands erupts, it could cause a chunk of land to fall into the ocean that could generate a tidal wave that is able to devastate America’s eastern seaboard. This is all the way off the coast of Africa. It would cause a wave that would sweep over the east coast.

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now all of this is simply to say that the idea of earthly and heavenly disorders of a cataclysmic dimension are not at all improbable or fantastical. There is terrible power locked up in the earth's natural forces. Only the will of God restrains it, and God is in complete control of it and can unleash it at any moment. And He will unleash it when Christ breaks the sixth seal. Someday that will happen, and it will happen according to God's plan, and when these unprecedented cosmic disasters begin to unfold, they will terrify mankind. That's how the chapter ends. The earth is shaken with such violence that people think the universe is coming apart and they panic. Verse 15, “Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;”

The sevenfold classification of mankind indicates that all mankind is affected by these events. But it's interesting you notice as you look at that verse that special attention is given to the rich and powerful, people who might have felt secure in the midst of all of this catastrophe, after all, their provisions, the wine and the oil, are being preserved. Well, they may have thought that their position and their wealth would keep them secure in the midst of this. But now they feel unsafe and they are completely undone. So they seek shelter in the rocks and caves.

Now, this is a very interesting chapter in the Bible. All of its interesting. It piques our curiosity. But I have to say for me, this is the most interesting part of the chapter. Everything people do here betrays the basic nature of man and the insanity of unbelief. They hide themselves in the caves as though rocks in caves could really shelter them from the omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent God. David learned the impossibility of that and he expressed it in Psalm 139 with the rhetorical questions, “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?” And then he proposes various directions, up to heaven or down to Sheol. Well, that doesn't work because God is both places. Well, let's go east or west. That doesn't work. God is already there actually guiding Him there, he says. The darkness won't hide him. “Even the darkness is not dark to You,” he says.

There's nowhere to hide. There's no escaping God. Not in caves in the ground or in modern philosophy. That's where men try to hide themselves. I don't doubt that there are legitimate attempts to understand things, men from a human perspective. But if the Bible interprets things correctly – and I think it does – then really, ultimately what philosophy is man's attempt to suppress the light, try to hide from God. And all for the same reason: guilt. Men know they are

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer’s Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

sinners. The catastrophes of the sixth seal are unsettling because they remind these people that they are mortal and they fear the consequences of their sin. It drives men to desperation. We see that here. The insanity only increases. The great and the small alike hide in the caves and they pray to the rocks, of all things, the dead rocks and the dead mountains. Verses 16 and 17, “and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, – ’” and literally “presence of Him” is the face of Him. Of course, God is a Spirit. God doesn’t have a literal face, but the picture I think we’re given is of this face looking at them, and they see this face and they can’t escape this holy, righteous, wrathful face. It terrifies them and they want to be hidden from that face “– and from the wrath of the Lamb; for –” they say “– the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

They have a lot of understanding here, but they are completely irrational. But then this is the heart of man. “Who is able to stand?” they ask. No one, of course. And they know that. No one can stand or survive the judgments of the sixth seal. No one can stand in the righteous judgment of the Lamb. They understand that. They’re confessing that. And yet, isn’t it amazing that knowing that the day, the great day of wrath had come and freely admitting that they’re not able to stand in it, nevertheless, they refuse to repent. I don’t think any verse in the Bible demonstrates any more clearly man’s willfulness than this verse. With the full knowledge that their doom is sure, they refuse to repent. Men do not want to submit to the king of this universe. The only one who can save them is the Lamb. He’s the only Savior of the world. And what do they do? They pray to the rocks, of all things, to hide them from the only One who can save them. That’s irrational, but really nothing’s changed. We see that from the very beginning. The first Adam. What’s he do after he’s sinned? He hides himself, he and Eve, from the Lord.

From the first Adam to the last kings and slaves, men have been hiding from God. That’s the nature of man. Men would rather be buried under rocks than submit to Christ, but men do submit to Christ. You’ve submitted to Christ, many of you, most of you, hopefully all of you. But you’re no different from these people. You’ve submitted because the grace of God is great enough to change our hearts, even your hearts. It is able to break the hardest heart and turn it to Himself. Sometimes it takes a storm like this to break a person and bring him or her to the end of themselves and bring them to the Lord, but the Lord does that in His grace.

“Practical Christianity” by Dan Duncan

Copyright © 2008 Believer's Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

There is really only one Rock to flee to, one Rock to hide in, one Rock to pray to, and that is the Rock of Ages. Multitudes will flee to Him in that future time. John sees them in the next chapter, in chapter 7. At the end of this chapter, the kings and the slaves and all ask, “Who is able to stand?” John sees in the next chapter a great multitude standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They're before that face that these men recoil from, and they're rejoicing. And they stand there because they have been washed. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And that is the only way for anyone to stand. It is by fleeing to Christ. He is the Rock of Ages in whom there is cleft a wide and deep enough place for all to hide who flee to Him in faith. Have you done that? Have you believed in Christ? Don't wait until the storms of life come. Today is the day of salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help you to do that. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for that Rock of Ages, Your only begotten Son, whom you sent into the world to die for sinners, and in whom we can hide, and who invites all who look to Him to come and be saved and clothed in white and righteousness. And thank You that You have cleft that rock for us. Thank You that the storm has fallen on Him and we're sheltered in Him and will never be touched by Him. Thank You that You have done that for us, and we give You the praise and acknowledge that You are absolutely sovereign in all things and we have You alone to thank. We thank You, Lord Jesus, for dying for us. And it's in the name of Christ we pray, Amen.