

# CONCERNING THE WAY

July 7, 2009

## LESSON 64: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST



### Chapter 6

#### The Lamb opens the Seals

Having taken the scroll from the hand of the Father, Jesus now begins to open the seals. As each seal is opened, a new judgment comes upon the earth. Remember that the last chapter closed with a scene of worship and praise, which is important to remember as the scenes of judgment follow in this chapter. God is love, but at the same time He is just, and He has the right to judge His creation. He has already been patient with mankind for 2000 years since His son ascended to heaven. For 2000 years most of mankind has rejected Him, and the sin and rebellion of the earth has only increased with each passing century. At some point His patience will come to an end, and the age of grace that He has been holding out will come to an end, and judgment will begin.

The Lamb had been slain to redeem the world. Having paid the ultimate price, He is now worthy to open the first seal and begin the first steps that will lead to His global rule on earth. Each time a seal is opened, the scroll is not read, but an event happens on earth that apparently corresponds to that section of the scroll.

History records a constant string of wars, natural disasters, famines, and pestilence, but what is about to happen on earth with these judgments is completely unique. All of history up to this point is just the natural manifestation of human selfishness, sin, and the brokenness of the fallen world in which man lives (Matthew 24:6). But these events that are described in the coming chapters are historically unique in the following ways:

1. **Severity** - The judgments are more severe than any previously experienced in history. This coming day is *unique* so there is “none like it” (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Rev. 3:10).
2. **Wrath of the Lamb** - Unlike previous times when God the Father has poured His wrath upon nations, this is the time of the “wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). It is the *Son’s* wrath that is being manifested.
3. **The Final Flowering of Sin** - Humanism and Satanism will be at their peak on a global scale. The *ascent of man*, as humanists view human history, will have reached its apex—which is in reality its lowest point since the *ascent* is really a *descent*. At this time, there will be a full flowering of sin unique in all history for its depravity and extent.
4. **Ushering in God’s Kingdom on Earth** - The wrath of the Lamb is not merely a disconnected judgment of sin. It is part of the sweeping away of the systems of man to make way for the promised *Messianic Kingdom* on earth—the only kingdom which will never pass away.

There are similarities between what happens in this book and the events leading to the first Theocratic Kingdom on earth – when Israel was delivered from Egypt.

*“There is a definite parallel between the supernatural preparation for the kingdom in history under Moses and the supernatural judgments which shall be poured out upon a rebellious world in preparation for the future Millennial Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ at His second advent. There is the same insolent challenge to the true God on the part of the Gentile powers (Ps. 2:1-3). There will be a similar gracious but infinitely greater preliminary miracle [like Ex. 7:12]—the Rapture of the Church—warning men of the supremacy of Jehovah and the ultimate defeat of all who rebel against Him. There will be the same swift*

*progression in the severity of the divine judgments which follow, and even a striking parallel in the nature of the judgments (cf. Rev. 6:1-17 through 18). There will be the same victorious outcome, the destruction of the antichrist and his armies in the judgment of Armageddon, and deliverance of the people of Israel (Rev. 19:1-21). There will be another song of victory, significantly referred to as 'the song of Moses... and the song of the Lamb' (Rev. 15:1-3)." Alva McClain*

Let's quickly review the Tribulation, which is also called in the Bible the Time of Jacob's Trouble (or distress), the Day of the Lord, etc.

**Daniel 12:1** "Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

**Daniel 12:7** I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

In Hebrew grammar you have singular nouns, dual nouns, and plural nouns. A singular noun is one of something, a dual is two of something, and plural means more than two. In verse seven "time" is a singular noun, "times" is a dual noun. So "time" is one, "times" is two, and "half a time" is a half, so that adds up to 3 and one half. We've gone over this before, but the angel is saying here that this period of time of the worst part of the Tribulation would last 3 1/2 years.

Some scholars believe that all of the seal judgments will happen during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the Tribulation, this 3 1/2 year period. In this view the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation are the "birth pangs" that Jesus talks about in Matthew 24 and Jeremiah 30. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half is when things really get bad and is referred to the "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21).

**Jeremiah 30:6-7** 'Ask now, and see if a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? (7) 'Alas! for that day is great, There is none like it; And it is the time of Jacob's distress, But he will be saved from it.

**Matthew 24:4-8** And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. (5) "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. (6) "You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (7) "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. (8) "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.

References in Revelation to the 3 1/2 years: Revelation 11:2,3 (42 months); 12:6 (1,260 days), 12:14 (time, times, half a time); 13:5 (42 months). John mentions the 3 1/2 years a little differently each time. Why? We don't know; maybe to emphasize that it's this "Great Tribulation" period that he's talking about.

Other scholars believe the first four seal judgments occur during the first half of the Tribulation, and actually correspond with the birth pangs Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24. I don't think we should be dogmatic about this, because it could be argued either way.

**Revelation 6:1-2** 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." (2) 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.



These judgments happen one after another, as each seal is opened. And they don't seem that bad at first, but they increase in severity until things on earth get more and more out of control, kind of like a snowball rolling downhill. The white horse is the first of four horses of different colors, similar to the horses seen by Zechariah in Zechariah 1:8, 6:2-6).

Who is this person on the white horse? Some say this is Jesus Christ, coming to earth to conquer. It does look similar, in that he's riding a white horse and wearing a crown as Jesus will when He returns (Revelation 19:11-12). Both are victorious conquerors. But that doesn't really make sense considering that all the other seals are bad news. And it is the Lamb who is sending this horseman out; He wouldn't be sending Himself out. Also, this rider is sent at the beginning of the Tribulation, where Christ will return at the end of the Tribulation. So, this can't be Jesus, it must be the antichrist.

**John 5:43** "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, you will receive him."

The world will be looking for a leader who can put an end to war, environmental and economic problems, poverty, terrorism, etc. This person will come on the world stage and make people believe he can do all those things. To an unsuspecting world he looks like Messiah, the political savior of mankind, yet he is a deceiver, the anti- or pseudo-Christ. This is a leader who is going to conquer (the bow), and he has authority (the crown) which is given to him, he didn't earn it or inherit it.

This man could even be alive today, may even be active in government somewhere in the world. But he is being restrained and can't come forward as the antichrist until the restrainer (the Church and the Holy Spirit) is taken out of the way. Jesus won't break the seal and the first angel won't say "Come" until the Church is taken out of the way.

As long as Noah was on the earth, God did not send the flood, but when Noah entered the ark, God sent the flood and judged the world. As long as Lot and his family were in Sodom and Gomorrah, God withheld His

fire to destroy the cities. But when Lot and his family were safely out of the cities, God did not hesitate to destroy the cities. Today, as long as the Church is in the world, God will not send these terrible judgments. But as soon as the Church is taken to heaven, God will not hesitate to pour out his wrath.

It's important to see that God is sovereign over everything that will be happening in the Tribulation period. Everything which takes place from this point forward is completely within the control of God. It is the Lamb Who initiates these events and there is no judgment, famine, or plague of demons which does not ultimately serve God's purpose in what unfolds. Many people have a problem with this idea; they think that makes God responsible for evil, for sin. Nothing could be further from the truth. God is in complete ultimate control over history, but people are still responsible for their decisions. God uses all things to accomplish His purposes, even evil. God allows this man of evil to have temporary authority over the world in order to test men on earth, and make the antichrist an instrument of His judgment. Today the majority of the Christian world views God as passive, impotent, helpless, and without a plan, but we see in this book that He is in complete control.

Some see that the fact that there are no arrows with the bow mentioned in this vision means that this rider will conquer by means of negotiation and deception, not by blood. He will be viewed as a man of peace.

**Revelation 6:3-4** When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." (4) 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.

Well, that's a horse of a different color! So, the Tribulation period starts with someone who looks like a good person who conquers the world by negotiation and bringing peace. The world will accept someone who they believe will save the planet. The red horse is the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage, when things start to go bad. The one who looked like he would bring peace actually takes peace from the earth. The antichrist shows his true colors. There is more war, much bloodshed, and things begin to fall apart. The rider of the horse is given a sword. This will be an unprecedented time of bloodshed that will blow away the humanistic idea that man is inherently good. Notice that the sword is given by God.

**Jeremiah 25:15-17** For thus the LORD, the God of Israel, says to me, "Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations to whom I send you to drink it. (16) "They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them." (17) Then I took the cup from the LORD'S hand and made all the nations to whom the LORD sent me drink it:

This is the pattern of God's judgment to nations who reject Him—He makes them mad and turn upon one another (Ezekiel 38:21). The red color of the horse may represent blood, but the Greek word for "red" here is the same word for the color of the dragon in Revelation 12:3, which we know is Satan.

**Revelation 6:5-6** 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. (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."

The color black speaks of judgment and famine, because the rider carries a scale, which was used to weigh food, and it is a picture of its scarcity. A denarius is about a day's pay. In this time you'll need a day's pay to get a quart of wheat. So there will be rampant inflation and shortage of resources. The antichrist's food

programs fail and result in the worst famine in history.

I have read about a dozen different theories about what the “oil and wine” reference means. It could be saying that God will preserve some resources for people to survive, as the oil and wine were some of the most important staples in people’s lives in that day. In some places in the world people are already paying 50-60% of their income for food. We seem to be heading in that direction ourselves.

Some take this phrase to mean that common commodities will be hard to come by, but luxury items will still be available for the upper classes of people. Whatever it means, we can be sure because of the context that this is no ordinary famine. There have been many famines in history, but this will be unprecedented.

**Revelation 6:7-8** *When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." (8) I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; 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.*

This is the last seal which sends a horse and rider. These four are to be understood as a group, indicating their global effects. The color of this horse (ashen, or pale, even sickly green) represents the color of a person who is sick or diseased as opposed to the color of a healthy person. The rider of this horse was named Death. And Hades was following after. Death and Hades is often found together in the Bible, because Hades is where the unsaved go when they pass through the gateway of death.

Things grow from bad to worse, which contradicts those who think that the Church will eventually bring in a perfect society. It will be probably be spread over a period of time, but this is saying that a fourth of the world population will be killed because of war, famine, disease, and wild animal attacks! Today that would be over one and a half billion people. Nothing even remotely close to this has ever happened in history. When energy resources and food resources begin to run out, there will be a massive slaughter on earth, and everyone agrees it is bound to happen. It’s hard for us to imagine, but experts agree that infrastructures could crumble very quickly during a time of extreme food and energy shortages. Not just Christians, but the whole world recognizes that something has to give soon. There’s too many people and not enough food and energy. The world recognizes that something has to change – that was Obama’s whole platform, he played on that. And he has admitted that our lifestyles are going to have to change.

Notice that the deaths will occur in four ways. We saw with the 2nd horse that many will die by the sword, and with the 3<sup>rd</sup> horse we can assume that many more will die by starvation. Now we have disease added to the mix:

*“Throughout human history, disease has killed people on a far more massive scale than war. More Union and Confederate soldiers died from disease during the Civil War than were killed in battle. An estimated 30 million people died during the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19 –more than three times as many as the estimated 8.5 million soldiers who died in battle during World War I.” The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*

In our day and age of new viruses and biological weapons, an epidemic of worldwide proportions is no longer science fiction, but experts say is inevitable. Chemical and biological weapons are much easier to use and develop as weapons by terrorists than nuclear weapons. The world does not have enough facilities to produce vaccines, nor are there vaccines available for all diseases. Also, overpopulation and increased travel make it impossible to localize an epidemic.

Those people who survive the first three may be so weak that they are unable to defend themselves from

wild animals which will also be starving and attack them for food.

**Ezekiel 5:15-17** 'So it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. I, the LORD, have spoken. (16) 'When I send against them the deadly arrows of famine which were for the destruction of those whom I will send to destroy you, then I will also intensify the famine upon you and break the staff of bread. (17) 'Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; plague and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. I, the LORD, have spoken.'"

**Ezekiel 6:11-12** "Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Clap your hand, stamp your foot and say, "Alas, because of all the evil abominations of the house of Israel, which will fall by sword, famine and plague! (12) "He who is far off will die by the plague, and he who is near will fall by the sword, and he who remains and is besieged will die by the famine. Thus will I spend My wrath on them.

From these passages we understand that what seem like intensified natural disturbances (war, hunger, death, attack by beasts) are actually expressions of God's judgment. So, unlike what mid-tribbers and pre-wrath proponents claim, God's wrath is already seen in the fourth seal—well before the sixth and seventh seals. Those people say that seals 1-4 are man's wrath, not God's. No way, it's all the wrath of the Lamb.

The picture being drawn is one of no escape. No matter which group or location a man is in, there is a God-ordained judgment which will result in death:

**Ezekiel 33:27** "Thus you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "As I live, surely those who are in the waste places will fall by the sword, and whoever is in the open field I will give to the beasts to be devoured, and those who are in the strongholds and in the caves will die of pestilence.

Amos predicted this character of the day of Jehovah:

**Amos 5:18-20** Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, For what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you? It will be darkness and not light; (19) As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. (20) Will not the day of the LORD be darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

There is intentional irony in God's reversal of roles as men become the source of food for animals (Genesis 9:2-3, Ezekiel 29:5; 39:17-20; Revelation 19:17-18). When man is disobedient to God, He reverses the original divine order where man was given dominion over the animals (Genesis 1:26-28; 9:2-3) and lets man be dominated by animals (Leviticus 26:22; Deuteronomy 32:24). The animals will be more aggressive both because of the emaciated and sickly condition of men and the scarceness of their own food supply. Once food becomes scarce, wild animals which generally leave man alone will begin to attack man for food.

That's it for the four horsemen. The next seals will be different than the first four.

**Revelation 6:9** 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;

This seal concerns believers who have been killed for their faith in Jesus. They are usually called Tribulation Saints. We can assume that after the Rapture many people will trust Christ. Some of these may be from families who left in the Rapture; others may be Jews who realized their mistake in not accepting Jesus as Messiah. Some will be people who heard the Word of God for the first time, or people who finally accept that the Bible is true. They will be severely persecuted by the antichrist's world government, and many will be killed. We don't know what point in the Tribulation this occurs at, but this verse appears to correspond with what Jesus said in Matthew 24:8-10:

**Matthew 24:8-10 "But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs. (9) "Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. (10) "At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.**

...And continuing through verse 28. These souls are those who were left behind in the Rapture that then trusted Christ afterwards and were killed because of their faith. These are not Church believers; the Church has already been glorified and is bodily in heaven. These are the souls of people who have died but haven't been resurrected yet. They will be given their glorified bodies at the start of the Millennial Kingdom. The blood of the martyred saints is considered as an "offering" before God as it accumulates at the base of the altar during this time of intense persecution of all who name the name of Christ (Matthew 24:9).

*"The picture of souls immediately in God's presence after death is in harmony with 2Cor. 5:8, and the fact that the martyrs are beneath the altar is consistent with the symbolism of Lev. 4:7, for the priest poured the blood of the sacrifice at the bottom of the altar, and the blood represented the life of the sacrifice (Lev. 17:11-14). So these martyrs will sacrifice their lives for God, and Heaven acknowledges this." Mills*

The souls of the martyrs reside under the heavenly altar. Though their physical life was terminated, they themselves are still very much alive:

*"Their slaying, then, is not the end of them. It is not the total interruption of their being in all respects. It makes them invisible to men in the flesh, in the natural state; but it does not hinder their living on as souls, or their being visible to heavenly eyes, or to the eyes of John in his supernatural and prophetic exaltation. The holy Apocalyptist tells us that he "saw" them, although they "had been slain;" and heard them speaking with loud voices, though their material tongues had been burnt to ashes, and their corporeal organs of speech had been stiffened in death. It is altogether a wrong interpretation of the Scriptures which represents the dead in a state of non-existence, unconsciousness, or oblivion." Seiss - The Apocalypse*

At this point there is evidently tremendous persecution of believers. These believers weren't killed by the previous judgments, but because of their faith in Jesus Christ. This doesn't have to be from direct attacks by the antichrist yet. The world false religious system will have become the dominant (and probably only) religious system by this point, and true believers in Christ will not be tolerated.

*"[Some assume] that the fifth seal saints are martyred because they would not bow to the Antichrist. But, again, there is nothing in the context of the fifth seal to indicate this. To be sure, they are martyred for their faith. But it does not say that it was specifically for refusing to bow down to the Antichrist. The self-proclamation of deity by the Antichrist takes place at the time of the Abomination of Desolation (Mtt. 24:15; 2Th. 2:4) which, . . . happens at the midpoint of the seven years. In Revelation, that midpoint begins with chapter eleven, when the temple is taken over by Gentiles for 42 months (the second three and one-half years). Then Antichrist proceeds to remove all opposition by killing the two witnesses (Rev. 11) and persecuting the Jews (Rev. 12). He then proclaims himself to be God and sets up his image (Rev. 13). Only those saints in and subsequent to chapter thirteen are being killed for refusing to accept the Antichrist."*  
Arnold Fructenbaum

*“The revelation of the fifth seal makes clear that in the future time of tribulation it will be most difficult to declare one’s faith in the Lord Jesus. It may very well be that the majority of those who trust Christ as Saviour in that day will be put to death. This is confirmed in Revelation 7 where another picture of the martyred dead of the tribulation is given, and in Revelation 13 where death is inflicted on all who will not worship the beast. Martyrdom in those days will be as common as it is uncommon today.” John Walvoord*

**Revelation 6:10** 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?"

These people aren’t like all the others who are surrounding God’s throne continually praising him, which is another reason we know they are not resurrected yet, they have to wait until the end of the Tribulation. These souls have the right to ask the Lord to avenge them. Why? Jesus is our Goel. He is our Kinsman-Redeemer. The term Goel describes the person who is next of kin and his duties as kinsman-redeemer : to buy back what his poor brother has sold and cannot himself regain (Leviticus 25:25-26); to avenge any wrong done to a next of kin, particularly murder (Numbers 35:12-27); to purchase land belonging to one deceased who was next of kin and to marry his widow and to raise up children for the deceased (Ruth 2:20; 4:14).

In this passage these people are asking Jesus to fulfill one of His duties as their kinsman redeemer – to avenge their blood. Some have a problem with the idea that saints in heaven will cry out for vengeance upon those on earth. But that’s what the Bible says, and they are asking in accord with the Law and the will of God.

You see the term “those who dwell on the earth” again (or “earth-dwellers”) here. It is used eight times in the book of Revelation, and doesn’t just mean people who physically live on the earth. It is a technical term for those in the end times who refuse salvation, persecute the saints, and continue to blaspheme God during the time of judgment. These are people who are being tested by this time of trial from God. Even though an angel preaches the gospel to each one (Revelation 14:6), they continue in their rejection of God to the end.

**Revelation 6:11** 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.

They are not rebuked for asking for vengeance, but given an answer that is the same as we receive to many of our prayers – “not yet”. These are the white robes promised to the victors, the overcomers (Revelation 12:11 Revelation 3:5, 18). This is the righteousness of Christ which is obtained, not by works, but by faith (Romans 3:5, 21-26; 10:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; James 1:20).

*“Here again a most difficult reality presents itself. God Who has the power to step in and end this holocaust at any moment instead chooses to allow it to play out in all its gruesome detail. Although we will never fully apprehend His divine patience, we know that it is explained, in part, by His great mercy toward those who have not yet turned, the glorious testimony being accrued by the martyred saints, and the filling up of the cup of injustice of the perpetrators. If He were to move immediately in vengeance at the time of their request, then some would be eternally lost that are yet to become their brethren.” Tony Garland*

This passage is our first clue that the reign of the antichrist will be one of the greatest times of revival in history. Because of the witness of the Rapture, because of the preaching of the 144,000 evangelists, the



two witnesses, and an angel, I believe millions will believe in the Tribulation, even though many, if not most, of them will be martyred.

**Revelation 6:12** 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;

The 6<sup>th</sup> seal gets more terrible yet. This earthquake and signs in the heavens, as with the other judgments during the Tribulation, are meant to cause people to repent and turn to God. Some think these phenomena are caused by unrestrained nuclear war, but I think it makes more sense that it will have no known cause other than that it is God causing it.

**Joel 2:10-12** Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness. (11) The LORD utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it? (12) "Yet even now," declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

**Joel 2:31** "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

These will be judgments that people will not be able to explain away as natural phenomenon. They will have to acknowledge that the creator of the universe is causing these things, or reject Him anyway. God will judge the sun and the moon to show mankind that He is the true source of light. God will interfere with what man has idolized, as some still do today.

**Revelation 6:13** and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.

"Stars" is better translated "asteroids", which make more sense in the passage. True stars would obliterate the whole planet! So this must be an asteroid or meteor shower coming on the earth. These are natural phenomenon God is using to bring His wrath on the earth for rejecting His grace and His Son.

*"The most likely identification of these particular falling stars is that of a great swarm of asteroids that pummel the earth. Such an event has never occurred in historic times, but scientists have long speculated about the probability of either past or future earth catastrophes caused by encountering a swarm of asteroids."* Henry Morris

The language of these verses describes disturbances of nature so incredible that many people just try to explain it away as hyperbole or symbolic. But this is exactly what Jesus described would happen just before His return:

**Matthew 24:29-30** "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (30) "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

And Isaiah was given a vision of this time:

**Isaiah 13:9-13** Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. (10) For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light. (11) Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless. (12) I will make mortal man scarcer than pure gold And mankind than the gold of Ophir. (13) Therefore I will make the heavens tremble, And the earth will be shaken from its place At the fury of the LORD of hosts In the day of His burning anger.

Now back to our Revelation text...

**Revelation 6:14** The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

Again, some scholars believe we're looking at a tremendous nuclear holocaust here. It doesn't really matter, but I think God will use natural forces. Isaiah speaks of the same thing:

**Isaiah 34:4** And all the host of heaven will wear away, And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; All their hosts will also wither away As a leaf withers from the vine, Or as one withers from the fig tree.

Mills offers an unusual suggestion concerning the purpose for the splitting of the sky:

*"In order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding on the source of these disasters, God will open the heavens for an instant, and the people on earth will be given a glimpse of God and the Lamb on their thrones (Rev. 6:16). Revelation 6:14 pictures an extended scroll suddenly being split; the two ends recoil, spring-like, around the end rod to which the scroll is attached. Suddenly, earth can peer into Heaven as Stephen did in Acts 7:56. Man sees Him who sits on the throne and the Lamb. Men will know they are experiencing the wrath of God, and this knowledge will be even more fearsome to them than the great natural catastrophes they will have endured."*

The upheavals on the earth will be so tremendous that the geography of the planet will be altered. GPS's and maps will become useless! The increasing judgments are designed to remove hope in anything but God so that all people have to admit how dependent they are on the Creator. These are things that we can't possibly understand because no one has ever witnessed anything like it; even the science of physics can't explain it. It will be terrifying, like the universe is coming apart.

**Revelation 6:15-17** 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; (16) 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; (17) for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Here's the classic response of every person who is confronted with their sin – trying to hide. How stupid to think that you could hide from God! Notice that people will be hiding from both the Father and Jesus Christ, it mentions both of them. And do they cry out to God to save them? No, they cry out to Mother Nature, on

the rocks and mountains to fall on them. There will be worldwide panic; people of all classes and walks of life will leave everything behind and run and hide. Survival will be everyone's only concern, and the bare necessities of life will be scarce.

The "wrath of the Lamb" doesn't mean this is the first seal that displays the wrath of God, but only that it is the first seal judgment that people on earth will recognize is the wrath of God. Even the unbelievers will see finally that God's judgment on the earth has come.

This is the Day of the Lord that is mentioned often in the Old Testament, a time that God will intervene in world events to judge His enemies and demonstrate who He is (Isaiah 2:10-22; Ezekiel 13:5, 9, 14, 21, 23; Ezekiel 30:3, 8, 19, 25-26).

**Zephaniah 1:14-17** **Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. (15) A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, (16) A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. (17) I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung.**

It's important to remember that if you are a believer, if you are in the Body of Christ, you are exempt from this day of wrath (Luke 21:36; Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 3:10). We who belong to Jesus will not have to go through this horrible time.

*"But then, amazingly, even this would pass. After these few terrifying days, the stars stopped falling and the terrible shakings ceased. The survivors emerged from their shelters and began again to rationalize their resistance to God. After all, these calamities could be explained scientifically, so perhaps they had been too quick to attribute them to God's wrath. They quickly set about rebuilding their damaged structures and became more resolute in their opposition to the gospel of Christ. Henry Morris*

*The book of Revelation discredits those who hold that God is so loving and kind that He will never judge people who have not received His Son. Though the modern mind is reluctant to accept the fact that God will judge the wicked, the Bible clearly teaches that He will. The Scriptures reveal a God of love as clearly as they reveal a God of wrath who will deal with those who spurn the grace proffered in the Lord Jesus Christ. The passage before us is a solemn word that there is inevitable judgment ahead for those who will not receive Christ by faith. John Walvoord*