

The Book of Revelation
Revelation 6:9-11 (NIV)
“The Fifth Seal - The Cry of the Martyrs”

Introduction

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when The LORD Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with His powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our LORD Jesus.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-8

The best way to interpret the opening of the fifth seal is to correlate it with the mid point of the tribulation period. The first four seals represent the first 3 and 1/2 year portion of the tribulation. During this time the Antichrist will rise to power. His government will be established and those who refuse to submit to his authority will be executed as traitors to society.

The Bible tells us that during these dark and terrible days, many will reject the Antichrist and instead become believers in Jesus. Some have said these many converts will come as a result of the message of the 144,000 sealed Jewish evangelists in **Revelation Chapter 7**, as well as, the fiery preaching of the two witnesses mentioned in **Chapter 11**. While I believe that this is true, I also think that many will be converted simply by reading all of *The Bibles* that have been left behind by the raptured Believers that have departed this world. God has promised that His Word will never return to Him empty. And I am convinced that during these very dark times, many who have lived as godless pagans will pick up The Scriptures to seek the answers for what has befallen this wicked world.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My Word that goes out from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.
Isaiah 55:10-11

As a result of these things, many people, including those from the nation of Israel will come to faith in Christ during the tribulation. And they will be martyred as a consequence. There will be swift and terrible retribution to those who eschew the governmental censorship that will come to pass during the reign of the Antichrist. Today we can already see the governments of this world becoming more and more intolerant of free speech. Any thought or opinion that does not align with federal policy is now viewed as hateful, bigoted, and seditious. Just imagine how it will be when the Church is no longer a legitimate “voting block” of the populace.

Satan will have a field day persecuting the people who turn to God during the tribulation. But he only has the power to kill their bodies. God Himself will see to it that their faithful souls are preserved. Multitudes will turn to Christ for salvation, in spite of the most severe religious persecution that this world has ever known. When the fifth seal is opened by The Lamb of God, we witness some of the initial results of this worldwide campaign of terror bent on removing from the populous those who will turn to faith in Christ. As the souls of those who have been martyred cry out for justice from underneath the altar of worship we see a powerful vision of the ***Sacrificed***, their ***Supplication***, and their ***Sanctification***.

The Sacrificed

When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. (vs. 9)

The souls under the altar... in *Old Testament* vernacular, the blood (representing the life) of a sacrifice was poured out at the base of the altar (**Lev. 4:7**). In this description, John is equating the deaths of those who resist the anti-Christ because of the Word of God, to an *Old Testament* sacrifice. These people are willing to give their lives, rather than worship the image that the anti-Christ will set up in the temple at the mid-point of the tribulation (The Abomination of Desolation - **Dan. 9:27**). These souls do not represent all the martyrs throughout history as some teach, they are the only the ones martyred during the tribulation.

They are killed because of their testimony and the Word of God. As stated earlier, I believe that as a result of the devastating effects of the first four seal judgments, people will begin searching for answers in *The Bible*. Never underestimate the power of the Word of God! Even without preachers, it has an effect. In conjunction with *The Bibles* left behind from the rapture, God will “seal” (call) 144,000 Jewish evangelists (**Rev. 7:1-8**) to begin preaching the word. And multitudes will be saved as a result (**Rev. 7:9**). To be saved in the tribulation period is to receive a death sentence from the anti-Christ. It is these true believers that are crying out to God, when Christ opens the fifth seal.

The Supplication

They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” (vs. 10)

I find it astounding that an entire “seal” of the scroll is dedicated to the prayers of the martyrs. **Psalms 116:15** says **“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”** It is interesting to note, that this is also one of the songs that Jesus sang after the Lord’s supper (**Matt. 26:30**), before He went to the cross. God deeply cares for His children. Those who have loved Him enough to lay down their lives will be heard by Him. When the fifth seal is opened it is as if God “drops everything” to listen to these precious martyrs. I am reminded of the boardroom executive, who stops the important meeting because his son is on the phone. Family comes first. Our Father cares about what His children have to say.

“How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge...” (vs. 10b)

These slain Believers are desperately pleading for justice. A lot of Christians really struggle with this prayer, because they feel it is somehow “un-Christian” for the martyrs to cry out for God’s retribution upon those who have so wronged them. This is due to a misunderstanding of God’s complete character. Yes, He is compassionate and merciful, but He is also the righteous judge. The prayer of the martyrs is a supplication for ***His*** judgment. As these prayers are rising up from the altar, it is important to recognize that the age of grace has come to an end. The time has finally come to avenge the many long years of suffering endured patiently by the people of God. We are commanded not to avenge ourselves, but instead to wait upon The LORD our God to set things right.

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is Mine to avenge; I will repay,” says The LORD. Romans 12:19

Many of the *Old Testament Psalms* are imprecatory in nature (*to imprecate* means *to call down God’s vengeance*). David cried out to God many times in his songs for God to avenge the evil done to him by his enemies. **Psalms 7, 35, 40, 55, and 64** are but a few examples of such prayers. We know, as believers, that those who despise our God and our faith will eventually be dealt with unless they repent. This doesn’t mean that we shall enjoy their suffering. We would much rather see them come to Christ, if

that were possible. This is why Jesus and Stephen both prayed for those who murdered them, but in reality, they both knew (as do we) that unless evil men repent, they are destined to perish. God is just, and His justice will be done upon the wicked. The only way for the **"Kingdom to come"** is for sin and wickedness to be removed, and the evil men done away with (**Zechariah. 5**).

The Martyrs of the tribulation are simply crying out to The Father to fulfill His promises and to purge this wicked world of those who are the enemies of His chosen people. There is nothing wrong with asking God to do what He has already promised in His Word to do. And immediately following the prayers of these precious martyrs, an answer from heaven is given. God instructs these precious saints to just be patient... and wait. God will fulfill all that He has promised. He is never too early or too late. He is always right on schedule.

The Sanctification

Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been. (vs. 11)

They were each given a white robe (**vs.11**). These believers were dressed in the white robes of righteousness, symbolically speaking, for the bodily resurrection of those slain during the tribulation is, at this point, yet to occur. However, because of their unwavering faith these martyrs are to be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. Just as all the other believers taken during the rapture (**4:4**), these are sanctified in Him. God not only listens to their prayer, but He declares them as righteous and adopts them as His own. They are given a robe, just as the prodigal son, who returns in **Luke 15**.

The prayer of the martyrs is answered, but the answer is a simple command to be patient. For at the time this fifth seal is broken the tribulation will only be at its mid-point, and there are many more martyrs to yet come. God wants more to be saved and escape eternal damnation. The purpose of the tribulation is not only to punish the wicked, but also to serve as an opportunity for lost people to turn to the Lord, and in so doing, find rescue. It will be a seven year period of hell on earth but many will be saved out of it (Jeremiah 30:7).

The word in the Greek translated "wait" actually means *to simply rest*. I find a great comfort in this, for it appears as if God is telling those who were slain to find their rest in Him, as they patiently await the fulfillment of all He has promised. No one shall ever harm them again, they are safe now. They have chosen the side of the righteous, and now all the rewards promised to those who will come to Christ are theirs. This wicked world can no longer antagonize them. I am reminded here of the words of Christ as He warned His followers of the persecution they would suffer:

You will be hated by everyone because of Me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. Truly I tell you, you will not finish going through the towns of Israel before The Son of Man comes. The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One Who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Matthew 10:22-28

I too find encouragement in this message from heaven to simply rest. For in these dark days in which we are now living, it is so easy to become discouraged and fearful. We see the moral decay all

around us, and we are both saddened and sickened by it all. It is in times such as these that we often forget that our God will arise to set all things right in His own due time. The Lamb of God Who is worthy to claim the deed to earth and to open its scroll will give Satan and his followers their eviction notice soon enough! So rest, child of God. Rest in the knowledge that God is sovereign and you too, like these faithful martyrs, have chosen the right side.

This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love The LORD your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For The LORD is your life, and He will give you many years in the land He swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
Deuteronomy 30:19-20

So you see, to choose Christ, is to choose *life!* And no matter what this world does to us, we can find our rest in Him! The book of *Revelation* speaks of the horrific judgments of God that are going to come upon the wicked of this earth. *But we have nothing to fear.* We can rest, for we too have chosen the right side. Our God is in control, and He will see to it that all things are made right at the proper time. All we need to do is to wait, and rest in His everlasting promise.

And let all those who are resting in Him say... TRUTH!!