

Fear of the Wrath to Come, Part 2

Revelation 6:15-17

66-27

Tonight we return to our study of the book of Revelation. Again chapter 6 and looking at verses 12 through 17. Let me read this text of Scripture to you. Revelation 6, beginning in verse 12, "And 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. And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And 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?'"

Right now man is having his day, but soon it will be the Lord's day, the day of the Lord. One of the central prophetic themes in Scripture is the coming of the great day of God's wrath, also known as the day of the Lord. It is a frightening inevitable day in the future of the world. We are reading about it right here in this particular section of Revelation. And for us to fully comprehend the sixth seal, we need to expand our understanding a little bit and find out what the Bible teaches about this very, very important event called "the day of the Lord."

It goes far beyond what is said right here, it covers texts of Old Testament and New Testament Scripture, and I don't want to belabor the point but I think it's essential for you to have a larger context in which to fit this description of the sixth seal. As I said last time, the sixth seal really initiates the day of the Lord. There have been already judgments that could be called the wrath of God, but this is the great day of wrath, this is the culminating day of the Lord to which all those things that have happened by way of judgment prior have been precursors preliminary warnings.

Now an excellent text for us to look at, if we're going to get a grip on this event called "the day of the Lord," is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. And some of you will remember when we studied this some many months ago now, but let me take you back to it...1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and just to look at the first three verses as a starting point to get a grip on the teaching of Scripture with regard to the day of the Lord.

Verse 1 says, "Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you." Now that phrase, "the times and the epochs" in verse 1 is a technical term for the time period around the Lord's return. The term "times" is *chronos*, it has to do with time itself. The term "epochs" is *kairos* that has to do with the events that take place during that time, or those times. So he is saying as to the various times and the events around the coming of Christ, you have no need of anything to be written to you.

One thing that comes immediately to mind is that there will be many different times and many different events that make up the time of the return of Christ. The Thessalonians, frankly, wanted to know all the details. How long until the day of the Lord? When will the Rapture of the church take place? When will the Kingdom be established? They wanted all the details to be filled in...give us the timing, give us the events, give us the sequence.

And Paul's response is that spiritual preparedness does not involve date setting, it does not involve clocks and calendar watching. It does not involve sign seeking as such. He says, frankly, you have no need of anything to be written to you. In other words, you don't need to know anymore than you already know. It isn't to your advantage, more details are not available.

Jesus had given many in answer to the disciples' question in Matthew chapter 24, you'll remember that the disciples said to Jesus, which really triggered this sermon that we call the Olivet Discourse. They said, "Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the age?" Give us the chronology, the clock, the calendar, and describe the events. They really wanted to know the same thing that the Thessalonians wanted to know and you remember Jesus went on to give them certain signs, certain things that they could look for, but never gave them the specific time as to when it would happen. And again in the book of Acts in chapter 1, familiar words of Jesus, "It is not for you to know the times or the epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority."

You don't need to know all the events. You don't need to know the exact timing. You know as much as you need to know.

To understand what He's really saying is to understand this. God has chosen not to disclose the timing of the return of Christ. He has not disclosed to us when the day of the Lord will come, when the events associated with the day of the Lord will come, when the seals will be opened, when the trumpets will be blown, when the bowls will be poured out. We don't know specifically what time, at what age in what year, at what date the Rapture of the church will take place. We don't know when the Tribulation time is going to come followed by the setting up of the glorious Millennial Kingdom of Christ. The reason we don't know is because the Lord has not revealed it. And I heard the other day, just last week, that another man, and a well-known on the radio, teaching the Bible, has now let us all know that it's going to happen in 1994. People continue to do this. We just passed one major milestone where literally millions of people had been engulfed in a Korean ministry that believed that the event was going to happen on a certain date in October. Of course, it..or was it November, one of the two, and it didn't happen and this date setting goes on. Our Lord says and the Apostle Paul says and it's recited to us again obviously through all the prophetic literature...we don't know when. We know some general events. We know some sequence of things. We don't know when this is going to happen. Therefore all generations live in a certain amount of anticipation and a certain amount of expectation.

In verse 2 he says, "You yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night." And there he introduces us to the term "the day of the Lord." It will come like a thief. How does a thief come? Unannounced, unexpectedly, suddenly and harmfully. You can't put into your calendar book the day and the hour in which the thief is going to come. He doesn't give you that information. And that's how the Lord's going to come, unexpectedly, suddenly and harmfully, but every generation therefore needs to be alert. In the sermon that we mentioned earlier in Matthew 24,

Jesus said in verse 42, "Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming." That is not something that the Lord has chosen to reveal. Verse 50 of the same chapter, "The master of that slave will come on a day when he doesn't expect him and in an hour in which he does not know." In chapter 25 verse 13, "Be on the alert then, you do not know the day nor the hour." And Luke chapter 12 verses 35 to 40 basically say the same thing. We don't know the specific moment which will trigger the events of the day of the Lord, we don't know the specific moment when the first seal will be opened, and the following seals as well, those things are not revealed to us.

Even in Revelation 16:15 it says, "Behold, I am coming like a thief," again suddenly, unexpectedly and harmfully. We don't know when the Rapture will happen. We don't know when the wrath of God will be released in the beginning of the birth pangs Jesus talked about. Therefore we don't know exactly the timing of the Great Tribulation so we don't know in what age, what century, what millennium the sixth seal will be broken and the day of the Lord will strike. We don't know when that seven-year period of divine wrath is coming, therefore in a sense it's imminent, it could come at any time and all generations live to some degree in expectation of it. Every generation is warned that the wrath of God is coming, and they should be ready for it and we do not know the exact time.

Now let me take that a step further. Even people who will be alive during the seven-year Tribulation, after the church has been taken out, people being redeemed and then, of course, there's a vast population of unredeemed people, even the people living during that time who can see the first seal and the second seal and the third and the fourth and the fifth will not know the exact time, they will not know the exact time when the sixth seal will be opened. They will not know the day, they will not know the hour, they will not know the specifics of that judgment. It is not given unto us to know precisely when that is going to happen. In fact, in verse 36 of Matthew 24 Jesus says of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son but the Father alone. That is a secret event known only to God. We don't know the exact moment.

So even if people are living in the Tribulation and seeing these events going along, they're not going to know exactly when the sixth seal is going to come. In fact, the believers may be trying to guess because they may be able to see what's going on, and they may say well it has to be soon, it has to be near, the unbelievers on the other hand are going to be so deceived they don't even recognize that it's coming at all. That's when verse 3 tells us while they are saying, and they means false prophets, peace and safety, then destruction will come upon them...what's the next word?...suddenly, like birth pangs upon a woman with child and they shall not escape.

The unbelieving world is going to be listening to the false prophets and the false teachers. Jesus talks about them in Matthew 24. He says, "While all these judgments are unfolding, there's going to be false teachers and false prophets and false christs, and they will effectively deceive people, they will be saying peace and safety, all is well, it's getting better." Remember I told you last time they will be killing Christians and killing Jews and telling the world if we can get rid of these people, we'll enter into utopia and peace will be ours. They're much like the false teachers of Jeremiah's prophecy who keep saying peace, peace, when there is no peace. The same ones Ezekiel 13 talks about saying peace, peace, and there is no peace. The same ones of Micah chapter 3 verse 5, peace, peace, and there is no peace. The same ones of 2 Peter 3:3, the scoffers who say, "Where is His coming, where is His coming, everything is going on like it's always gone on." And they will effectively deceive the whole world.

So the whole world, even though they have seen the five seals opened and someone can show them

a Bible and describe it to them, will be so deceived by Satan and the Antichrist and false teachers who are in accord with them, that they will not expect the day of the Lord. And even believers who know it's coming won't know the exact moment of its arrival. He says in verse 3, when they are saying peace and safety, then olethros, disaster, ruin, hopeless ruin and the loss of everything will hit. It doesn't mean necessarily the destruction of their being, but the destruction of their well-being. It is not the end of their existence, it is not annihilation, it is the ruin of the purpose of their existence. And He says it will come suddenly. It's going to come unexpectedly, it's going to come suddenly.

One verse to keep in mind is Matthew 24:27, "For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so shall the sign of the Son of Man be." When the moment comes to inaugurate this great day of the Lord and the fury of God's wrath and the wrath of the Lamb, it will come suddenly, and shockingly, even to believers who will now know its moment. And then comes judgment.

Now this that comes is what the Bible calls "the day of the Lord." It is mentioned 19 times in the Old Testament, and specifically four times in the New Testament. Just a very brief and rapid consideration of it.

Listen to what the Old Testament prophets said about the day of the Lord. Isaiah 2:12, "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up and it shall be brought low. Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand," Isaiah 13:6. In verse 9, "Behold, the day of the Lord comes...here's a definition of it...cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate."

The prophet Jeremiah chapter 46 verse 10 said, "This is the day of the Lord God of host, a day of vengeance that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries."

The prophet Joel wrote in chapter 1 verse 15, "For the day of the Lord is at hand, it shall come as destruction from the Almighty." In chapter 2 verse 11, he said, "For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible." In the same chapter, verse 31, he said, "The sun will be turned into darkness, the moon into blood before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord."

The prophet Amos wrote in verse 18 of chapter 5, "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord, for what good is the day of the Lord to you? Is not the day of the Lord darkness and not light?"

Malachi 4:5, "I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

In Zephaniah 1:14 it says, "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and hastens quickly, the noise of the day of the Lord is bitter, it will be noisy. The day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble, distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

Six times it is referred to as the day of doom. Four times it is called the day of vengeance. Always it is identified as a time when God unleashes His final fury. And there's always a sense that it is near in every generation. Ezekiel 30 verse 3, "The day is near, even the day of the Lord is near." Joel 2:1, "The day of the Lord is coming, it is at hand." Joel 3:14, "The day of the Lord is near." Obadiah 15,

"The day of the Lord is upon all the nations and it is near." Zephaniah 1:7, "The day of the Lord is at hand." Chapter 14 verse 1 of Zechariah, "The day of the Lord is coming."

Every generation has lived with the reality that it could come at any time. And so the prophets have warned and the New Testament writers have warned that the day of the Lord is coming. It is a day of fury. It is a day of judgment. It is a day of wrath.

Now with all of that in mind, as you come to Revelation chapter 6, and you read the statement in verse 17, "The great day of their wrath has come," it is...it is only reasonable to assume that this is describing the day of the Lord. The sixth seal then opens the day of the Lord, the final fury of God's wrath. Though all that has happened prior has been the wrath of God preceding it, this is the final day of God's wrath. And by the way, in the Old Testament there were some historical days of the Lord, that is when God intervened in powerful vengeance, and they too had preliminary indications and warnings as God gave certain judgments which led up to His final fury. So their historical precedence for the same pattern here where you have a series of judgments leading up to the final fury called the day of the Lord.

This day of the Lord, I want to add as a footnote, starts toward the end of the seven-year Tribulation time and it really comes in two waves. The first part of it comes to the end of the seven-year Tribulation, and the second part of it comes at the end of the one-thousand year Millennial Kingdom. So it comes in two phases with a thousand years in between. In Peter's second epistle, I think this is abundantly clear because in verse 10 of chapter 3 Peter says, "The day of the Lord will come like a thief," same terminology, and he says, "When the day of the Lord comes, the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, the earth and its works will be burned up." And then he says down in verse 13, "Ultimately there will come a new heavens and a new earth."

So the day of the Lord stretches all the way from the end of the seven-year period where it starts, to the coming of the new heaven and the new earth which is after the thousand-year Millennium. So what I'm saying, follow the thought, is that the day of the Lord comes in two phases, one at the end of the seven-years, and then a final phase at the end of the Millennial Kingdom as He consumes what is existing then as the millennial earth and heavens and inaugurates the new heaven and the new earth which is the eternal state.

You say, "Well how is it then one great day if it's separated by a thousand years?" And Peter gives you the answer, very, very clearly in that same text when he says in verse 8, familiar words to us, you know them well, "Do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is as one day." When the day of the Lord comes, the fact that there's a thousand-year interval in between is not difficult for God to deal with, He is above and beyond time, and with Him a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day.

So that is the larger context biblically in which you have to see the sixth seal. Now let's return to the sixth seal in our study. The force here, if we can identify a force, we said the first seal the force was peace, the second seal the force was war, the third was famine and the fourth was pestilence, and the fifth basically was vengeance. If we identify a force here the force is fear...what really comes through here is fear like no fear the world has ever known. It will lead to the world's largest prayer meeting only they're not talking to God, they're praying to the mountains and the rocks, as verse 16 says, and asking them to crush them.

Luke 21:26 I remind you, says that some will faint from fear, the word faint means to die. People will be literally scared to death. Fear is the essence of the sixth seal. The world will fear and they will now know that what they've been experiencing has been the work of God and all the warnings that they had from all the believers who were opening the Bible and showing them the truth, all the warnings that they tried to silence, even the gospel preached by the everlasting angel, the 144 thousand converted Jews, 12,000 from every tribe, the two witnesses, all of the messages they've heard from everybody giving them the truth will now all of a sudden take meaning and they'll know that what was being said was in fact true, God was sending them warning signs about the coming day of the Lord.

And so, we come then to the sixth seal, the Lamb taking the title deed to the earth and unrolling it one more time, breaks the sixth seal, this is the title deed that describes His takeover of what is rightfully His as the heir of God to the whole universe which is in the hands of the usurper Satan and his minions and men and He unrolls it another time and the sixth seal brings the day of the Lord. The world refused to believe the warnings of Christians, the world has tried to under the leadership of Antichrist destroy Christians, kill them all, martyr them, kill the Jews as well to wipe out the people of God. They have been deceived by Antichrist to believe that what is happening is caused by Christians and Jews and if they can massacre all of them and remove them all, they can go into utopia. And now all of a sudden they know that isn't true because of what starts to happen in the sixth seal.

Suddenly, as Jesus said, like lightning six things take place. We went over them last time, I'll just remind you. Seismos, see the word earthquake, it's actually the word seismos, it means shaking. The whole universe begins to shake. Then he says, "The sun became black as sackcloth made of hair." Because of the breakup of the planet earth and the breakup of other bodies in space, the exploding earth sends fire and smoke into the atmosphere which obscures the sun. It may be that the sun itself starts to smoke as somehow it starts to disintegrate. The moon becomes like blood, it is eclipsed in blackness and perhaps the red fringes of the fire, a volcanic action on the earth. And then it says, most fascinating things in verse 13, "The stars of the sky," remember, that's the word steraes(?), it can mean any body in the sky, not just stars as we know them, "fell to the earth." Obviously it can't mean just a star because if a star hit the earth, they are so massive, they are, for the most part, thousands of times, if not millions of times larger than our own sun, it would consume us before it ever landed here. So it's fair to assume that this has in mind asteroids, meteorites, whatever other objects are flying around in space, that begin to pummel the earth. And it is also possible that even the stars begin to fall out of the heaven toward the earth. But all these things coming out of the sky are like a fig tree casting its unripe figs when it's shaken by a great wind. The sky starts to fall, the earth is bombed by careening bodies in the disintegrating heavens.

Then in verse 14 the sky was split apart, that's the fifth component, like a scroll. If you took a scroll and stretched all the way to its limit it would be like a canopy and having stretched it, it's split in the middle and just rolled up on two sides. The sky as we know it disappears. Then every mountain and island moved out of their places, the earth begins to tremble, the shifting crustal layers of earth begin to move.

Now this is what is described as the sixth seal. These are, I think, what Jesus meant when He said in Luke 21:11, "There will be terrors and signs in heaven." The stable sky, the sky from which we can navigate, the sky that's always the same, that is absolutely predictable, hundreds of thousands of years into the future men can tell you what is going to orbit where and where it will be then because it

is so predictable will instantaneously become unpredictable.

And the world now knows who's doing it because in verse 16 they recognize the wrath of the Lamb...the wrath of the Lamb and the presence of the one who sits on the throne who is God.

When you preach a message like this you assume people are going to say, "Ah, that's ridiculous...that's absolutely ridiculous." The scoffers have always said, "Everything continues as it has from the beginning, nothing ever changes, the sky is always the same, the planets always move in the same orbit, everything is fine."

Well if you've been thinking that, the latest issue of Newsweek magazine might rattle your cage a little bit. Newsweek, November 23, 1992 has a cover story. The cover says, "Doomsday science, new theories about comets, asteroids and how the world might end." That's the title. And the cover has a rendering, a depiction of the earth and plummeting toward the earth is a flaming fireball, just as we have just read being described. The article inside is absolutely amazing. The teaser in the Table of Contents says this, "Doomsday science, how will the world end? On March 23, 1989 an asteroid a half mile across missed the earth by just seven hundred thousand miles. No one saw it coming. If it had arrived a mere six hours later, it might have wiped out civilization. Astronomers are scurrying to start a census of just what threats lurk in the solar system and as the pace of discovery picks up, so should the pace of any earthling's heart. Earth runs its course about the sun in a swarm of asteroids...says astronomer Donald Yeomans of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena...sooner or later our planet will be struck by one of them."

If you turn to the article you'll find a copy under the picture that they give. The copy says this, "A deadly collision could suck out the atmosphere, scorch the earth and shroud the planet in dust." And then the article says this, "It comes screaming out of the sky like a scud from hell, bigger than a mountain and packed with more energy than the world's entire nuclear arsenal. It hits the atmosphere at a hundred times the velocity of a speeding bullet, and less than a second later smacks into the ground with an explosive force of 100 million megatons of TNT. The shock waves from the crash landing travelling 20 thousand miles an hour levels everything within a hundred and fifty miles. Simultaneously a plume of vaporized stone shoots up from the impact sight, blasting a hole through the atmosphere and venting hot debris. The vaporized rock cools, condensing back into hundreds of millions of tiny stones as they streak back to the ground over the next hour, they heat up and soon the very air glows hot pink. Steam hisses from green leaves, buildings and even trees burst into flame, nitrogen and oxygen in the atmosphere combined into nitric acid, any surviving life crawling out of a burrow or cave gets pelted with a rain as caustic as the acid in a car battery. That's what astronomer Henry Melosh(?) of the University of Arizona calculates what would happen if something six miles across fell from space and smacked into earth. Six miles also happens to be the probable size of the Swift Tuttle(?) comet. Swift Tuttle is the peripatetic frozen dirt ball that an astronomer last month declared has a one in ten thousand chance of hitting earth on August 14, 2126. An estimated twenty tons of particles, most no bigger than grains of sand, fall on the ground each day. Of course, sometimes the missiles are bigger sand grains, thousands of meteorites as big as a lump of coal fall every year, usually harmlessly. One smashed through a garage in Illinois, another totalled a car in a New York City suburb last month. Ironically the misses are more worrisome than the hits. On March 23, 1989 an asteroid a half a mile across missed earth by just 700 thousand miles. No one saw it coming. If it had arrived a mere six hours later it would have wiped out civilization. So much for the friendly skies."

It says in another part of the article, "Some counting of asteroids that orbit close enough to earth depose a threat is going on. In the late 1980's they were finding fifteen asteroids a year of the size that could eliminate human society. Now they're up to thirty-five a year and gunning for one hundred a year by 1994. On just four summer nights in 1990 one scientist found three. One asteroid that crosses directly earth's orbit is twenty miles wide, large enough...large enough to do immeasurable, incalculable damage. There are a half dozen bigger than five miles across."

The article goes on to describe these kinds of things that are floating around up there. Some are truck size, it says. That is smaller than thirty feet across, they pack a wallop of 50 thousand tons of TNT. Such an asteroid or comet may produce a meteoric fireball, a burst of light and heat, but is usually too high in the atmosphere to cause significant damage. Then there are some the size of a building a diameter between thirty and three hundred feet. They come into our space and they explode five miles up with a force of twelve megatons. They annihilate reindeer thirty miles away, ignite the clothes of a man sixty miles away and level more than 700 square miles of a Siberian forest." You say, "How do you know that?" Because one did it in 1908. "A sturdier asteroid, one made of nickel and iron rather than stone would plunge to the ground without exploding. If one the size of that tungusta(?) rock hit the rural United States, calculates John Pike, director of Space Policy for the Federation of American Scientists, it could kill seventy thousand people, cause four billion in property damage, could also flatten buildings twelve miles away, according to the NASA panel. If it hit an urban area, there would be upwards of three hundred thousand deaths. If it hit in a seismic zone, it could trigger earthquakes topping 7.5 on the Richter Scale."

Those aren't bad. Those aren't bad. The next one is the size of a mountain...of a mountain. If an asteroid six hundred feet across fell in the mid Atlantic Ocean, calculates astrophysicist Jack Hills of Los Alamos National Laboratory, it would produce a massive tidal wave six hundred feet high on both the European and North American coasts. Larger asteroids, half a mile across, would surely hit the earth and rank as the greatest catastrophe in ...if they hit the earth...would rank as the greatest catastrophe in human history. Thanks to the cloud of dust thrown up by this kind of million megaton explosion, there would be no crops anywhere for a year. In contrast, a comet of this size since its ice and frozen gases fragment easily, would probably break up in the atmosphere and explode like the tungusta hit.

Then there are city size ones, they say. Asteroids or comets larger than three miles across, like Swift Tuttle. If one of them hit the Gulf of Mexico, it would create a wave three miles high. Nine hundred miles away the mammoth wall of water would still be fifteen hundred feet high. Such an asteroid landing in the Gulf of Mexico would flood Kansas City. The impact would make entire continents burst into flame, block sunlight, and make agriculture impossible. Humans would go the way of trilobites.

And then the article, as if that isn't bad enough, went on to say, "Our Milky Way and its closest neighbor, the Andromeda Galaxy are hurtling toward each other at about 125 kilometers a second. At that rate they will close the two million light years that separate them and collide in five billion to ten billion years." I love that when they say that. The reason they say that is because they always assume those things have gone and will go at the same speed. "Since Andromeda is two to three times bigger than the Milky Way, the collision will be analogous to a hostile take over, says astronomer Lars Hurnquist(?) at the University of California. Our galaxy will be consumed and destroyed, even if Earth managed to survive somehow, given all the empty space in the galaxy, the collision could send more comets, asteroids and other debris pounding into our solar system." In

other words, they now know that there is a collision course all through space in a small level the size of a little rock all the way to colliding galaxies. And all God has to do is say the word and it all happens. By then, it says, "The earth may well be cooked anyway by our own evolving star, the sun, is gradually getting bigger and more luminous. When the sun is twice its current diameter, the Earth's oceans will boil. When the sun is fifteen times brighter, Earth's surface temperatures will reach six hundred degrees Kelvin, and its crust will melt."

And then the article says, "All this will take billions of years because the universe is already billions of years of old." The truth is, the universe is young and what they think took a long time to arrange itself, God arranged instantaneously, just like He'll disarrange it instantaneously.

The article then grasps for some hope against this inevitable holocaust and closes with this paragraph. "During a human life time there's roughly a one in ten thousand chance that earth will be hit by something big enough to wipe our crops worldwide and possibly force survivors to return to the ways of Stone Age hunter, gatherers. Those are the odds of dying from anesthesia during surgery, dying in a car crash in any six-month period, or dying of cancer from breathing the automobile exhaust on the Los Angeles Freeway. Killer asteroids and comets are out there and some day one will be on a collision course with earth of all the species that ever crawled, walked, flew or swam on earth, an estimated two thirds became extinct because of an impact from space in the past. Mankind may yet meet that fate, too. But we're the only species that can even contemplate it and just maybe do something to prevent it."

Isn't that amazing? They know that this is a threatening universe. They can't prevent it, it's going to come. If they read the book of Revelation, they can know it's going to come. The only thing they can't know is when it's going to come. But it's going to come. And when it comes, and the earth starts being pummeled by asteroids and meteorites and comets and whatever else of bits and fragments of stars and suns come plummeting in to our space and when the colliding galaxies do what God intends for them to do in the moment of His wrath, the world is going to know that it is God. So there is reason for fear. That's our first point, plenty of reason for fear. And now the scientists from a non-biblical perspective are beginning to awaken to it.

Let's look at a second point, just briefly, the range of fear...the range of fear. That's in verse 15. How widespread is it? "The kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong," now in those five categories you have the elite of the world. The kings and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong all describe the upper class, the elite. Everybody all over the world is going to be involved in this fear. And he starts with the elite. They're going to see it, they can't avoid it, it's going to come, it's going to be visible, it's going to leave its tremendous impact, even as the Chernobyl thing left its impact on the world in a small way, or as the explosion of the volcano in Alaska, or any other of those kinds of things did, this is going to be way beyond anything ever imagined by men. And the whole world of elite people will have absolutely no way to deal with it. The last two classes, every slave and free man, just divide the common people into the two categories that common people in ancient times were divided into, either slaves or freemen. Whether you're the elite or the common man, you're going to know it, it's going to come. Nobody is going to be left out. Everybody is going to see it. Everybody is going to feel it. Everybody is going to experience it.

Isaiah writes in chapter 2, "Enter the rock and hide in the dust from the terror of the Lord and from the splendor of His majesty. The proud look of man will be abased and the loftiness of man will be

humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day." In verse 19 he says, "Men will go into caves of the rocks and holes of the ground before the terror of the Lord and before the splendor of His majesty when He arises to make the earth tremble. In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats, their idols of silver and their idols of gold which they made for themselves to worship in order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, before the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty when He arises to make the earth tremble."

But to the redeemed, Jesus said in Luke 21:28, "When these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads because your redemption is drawing nigh." When the redeemed see this, they know the Kingdom is coming...the King is coming, the Kingdom is following. But the rest of the unredeemed of the world, all of them, the range of it, everybody is going to be in fear. And some will be scared to death.

Those who don't die from fear are noted in verse 16 and 17 in the reaction. We saw the reason for their fear, the range of fear, now finally the reaction. It says they hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, just as Isaiah said. We wish we could have read they repented, don't we? We wish we had read that they saw their sins and they cried out to God for mercy. They certainly have been warned over and over and over again. They have heard the gospel. They have tried to stamp out its preachers. We wish they had cried for mercy. But if you read their reaction in chapter 9, verse 21, they didn't repent of their murders, of their sorceries, of their immorality, of their thefts, they didn't repent, even though the trumpet judgments were on them. And in chapter 16 in line with the bowl judgments, verse 11, they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores and they didn't repent of their deeds. They should cry for mercy, but like the demons of which James wrote, they believe and tremble but they don't repent.

Why don't they repent? Because they have followed the path of Satan and they are deceived. They believed the lie. They identified with the Antichrist. And God has left them in that delusion. He has left them in that deception. He has turned them over to wrath. Verse 11 of 2 Thessalonians 2, "God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who didn't believe the truth but took pleasure in wickedness." Like Pharaoh who hardened his heart and had his heart hardened by God, finally, they who harden their hearts will have their hearts hardened by God. And in that moment they will not, yes, they cannot believe.

And in their terror, it says, they hid themselves in the caves and the rocks of the mountains. That's a pretty silly place to go because all that stuff's coming apart, but it really doesn't matter, does it? Where are they going to go? They can't escape. They can't get away. It's not possible because God is breaking up everything. Furthermore, you can't go anywhere where the Lord can't find you. Read Psalm 139 verses 7 to 13. And it certainly isn't very smart because that's exactly the place you're going to be crushed because the mountains and the rocks and the caves are collapsing under the judgment of God and I think that is their intent. Destroy us. First of all, hide us and crush us, don't let us live to face God. They would rather be dead than to face God, not knowing what that death will mean is that they will face God.

Verse 16, "They said to the mountains and 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.'" They're praying to Mother Nature. Hosea 10:8 says, "They will say to the mountains, 'Cover us,' and the hills, 'Fall on us.'" It's a death wish. It isn't rational, but they would rather die than face God.

They know He's angry and the Lamb is angry and they know what has come...verse 17, "The great day of their wrath has come." It's here, the day of the Lord, and then the question. "Who is able to stand?" What's the answer? No one. First Thessalonians 5:3 says, "Destruction will come and they shall not escape." The prophet Nahum wrote in verse 6 of chapter 1, "Who can stand before His indignation? Who can endure the burning of His anger? His wrath is poured out like fire and the rocks are broken up by Him. Nobody will survive...nobody will survive."

So, the fear...it is a terrifying, terrifying scene. Look at Hebrews 10 for just a brief moment. Hebrews 10:26 says, "If we go on sinning willfully, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there's no longer a sacrifice for sins." If you know the gospel, if people hear the gospel today or even in that time, and they go on sinning willfully after knowing the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. What does remain, verse 27, is a certain terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. If you reject the gospel, this is what you have to look forward to, should you be alive in the day of the Lord, and should you miss the day of the Lord on earth, you will still experience eternal damnation. And it will be severe. As verse 31 says, "It's a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." They think if the mountains will crush them and if the rocks will crush their lives, they won't have to face God. Boy, are they wrong.

You say, "John, are you saying that nobody is going to repent?" No, during this period of time there will be innumerable Gentiles converted, as chapter 7 verse 9 says, so many they can't even be numbered, no man could even count them from every nation and tribe and people and tongue. Also, the Jews will be converted. Romans says, "All Israel will be saved." Zechariah says, "The Jews will look up and they will look on the One whom they have pierced and they will mourn for Him as an only son and a fountain of blessing and salvation will be opened to Israel." There will be salvation during this period of time among Gentiles and among the Jews as the Jews finally see their Messiah, believe in Him and receive the Kingdom. But the vast people of the world will be crushed. Their own wish coming true, but they won't escape for they'll meet their Maker after death to be sent forever into eternal hell.

What is the importance of all of this for us? It should be obvious. If you're an unbeliever, be warned, you are, according to Romans 2:5, treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. You're accumulating a debt which God will pay you back for with His wrath in the day of wrath. You need to be warned.

If you know the truth of the saving gospel and you go on sinning willfully and reject it, the only thing you can look forward to is a terrifying expectation of judgment. If you're a Christian, first of all you can be thankful for what you're going to escape. Amen? And we're going to be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air and we're going to be with Him, coming back with Him in glory to reign.

Secondly, as a believer I'm not only to be thankful but I need to be faithful to evangelize, right? When I understand what is coming, I have to warn men. On the one hand I'm thankful that I'm going to be rescued from wrath, that I am not destined for the wrath to come. But on the other hand, there's a world of people that are and I have the saving message of Jesus Christ to bring to them that they might be delivered from that.

Father, I pray for each of us here who have heard this Word, that a right response might come forth from us. For those who do not know Christ, may the fear grip their hearts now so that they won't experience it in the future. And may they come to Christ who in this day of grace is offering full forgiveness and pardon for all our sins if we will but acknowledge His death and resurrection,

embrace Him as Savior and Lord. For us who are Christians, may we be thankful for the gift of grace which has taken us out of those who are the children of wrath and made us children of God which has given us the promise that there is a place in the Father's house of which Jesus spoke when He said, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for, I will come again and receive you to Myself that where I am there you may be also." That we're not headed for wrath. We're not destined for wrath. We're not the children of wrath. We're not of the darkness, we're not of the night, we're children of the day. And we will escape that. We thank You for that. At the same time we are responsible to preach the saving truth that can deliver others, even as we have been delivered, make us faithful to do that as well. In Christ's name. Amen.

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